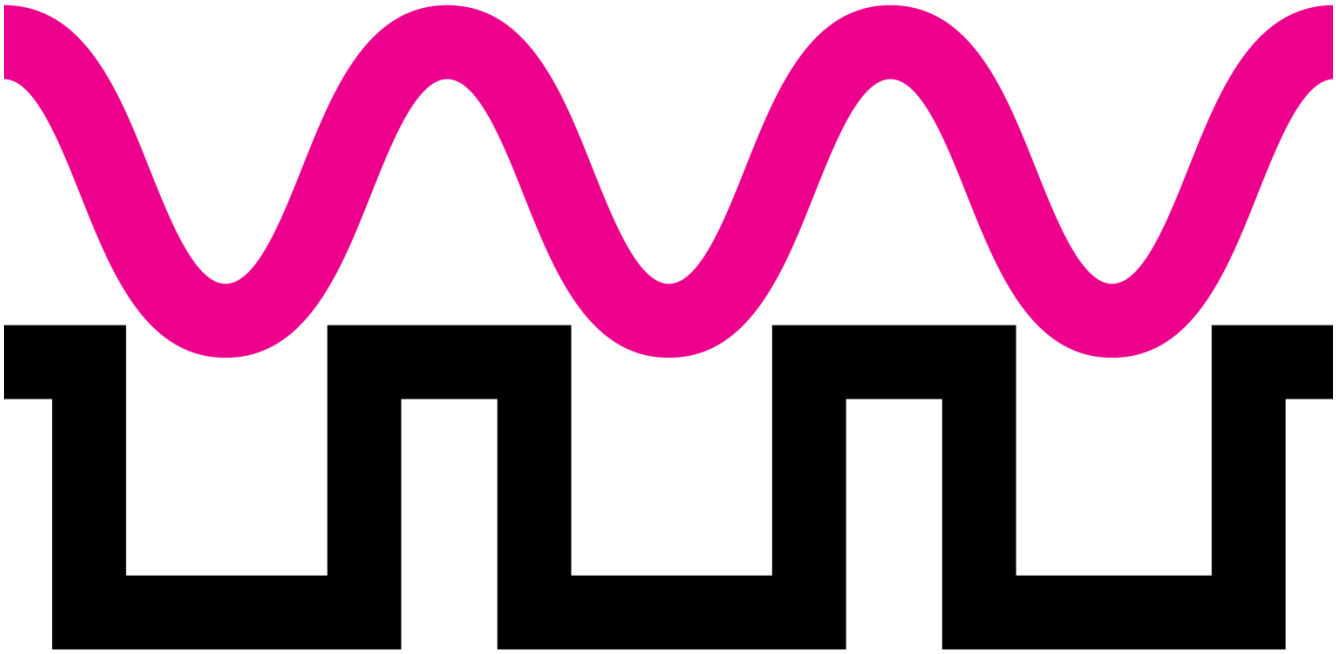
# ARCHITECTURAL COMMUNICATION

## LECTURES



Maria Diamandieva

# ARCHITECTURAL COMMUNICATION

## LECTURE COURSE

**2015**

## CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION……7**

**CHOISE OF ANALYTICAL STANDPOINT…… 10**

**CONTEMPORARY MEDIA/ ARCHITECTURE CITY HYBRID……11**

**ARCHITECTURE TELLS STORIES and is MEDIA……....14**

**MIXING REALITIES……17**

**ARCHITECTURAL MODEL OF COMMUNICATION…….22**

**THE FUNCTIONS OF ARCHITECTURAL COMMUNICATION…….25**

**THE ARCHITEC-ADRESSER……..35**

**THE PHENOMENON STAR ARCHITECT…….39**

**COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL AND URBAN HYPERMEDIA…….79**

**ARCHITECTURE – MEDIA PERFORMANCE……81**

**CONCLUSIONS……89**

**REFERENCES……..91**

## INTRODUCTION

This book is meant as a primary, enhancing a basic critical mindset development of students in architecture. It is in general an introduction to an analytical platform equating architecture to a communicative medium as *an a priori* critical perspective. It comprises the texts of the lecture course "*Architecture as Public Media*" as a part of the curriculum of the overall Postgraduate Master Degree program at the Architectural Faculty of University of Architecture, Construction and Geodesy in Sofia, "*Architecture Theory and Criticism*". The texts are extracts of my book *Architecture as Communication,* published in 2014.

As a pioneering project, building on the traditional training program of architects – mostly recently graduated, it is meant to widen the standard topical syllabus of the practicing architects and to encourage a critical understanding of contemporary architecture and urban culture, situated in the context of the wider sphere of the humanitarian knowledge.

The "*Architecture as a Public Media*" educational panel is amplification to the introduction of architectural criticism basics, upgrading the mandatory course of the architectural education in Bulgaria. It is meant to examine the complex dynamic relationship between Media and Architecture and for this purpose we will look at architecture basically as COMMUNICATION, as a myriad of symbols and embodiments of particular ideas and values. And at the impact contemporary communication practices have had on the approaches of architecture and the conditions of experiencing of the habitable environment.

The course is meant to serve objectives as:

1. Facilitation with competences of identification of new critical stand points and criteria in the multicriterial design choices, acknowledging architecture as a complex cultural system.
2. Broadening the expectations and understanding of the architectural profession by a critical revaluation of the production of the cotemporary architectural elite, interpreting architecture as a specific media space – organizing format of its own right.
3. Enhancing the analytical evaluation of contemporary architectural events by taking into account the diversity of the impact of the current media stream on the architectural production, and enriching the abilities of the interested auditoria to uncurtain meanings behind the usually observed surface phenomena.

The lectures are aimed to expanding and enriching the professional tools of the practicing architects, implying an understanding of the theoretical and historical disciplinary discourse in terms of the ratio architecture/communication. This ratio is assumed, although provisionally, a prime absolute in analyzing the diverse

manifestations of the modern architectural flow – a matrix of value justifications and criteria of harmonious unity, especially when the users choices of architectural objects, recognized as aesthetically significant are concerned.

As the central standpoint is that architecture is a form of communication, consequently as such it becomes subject to familiar rules of efficiency achievement of its messages, rules widely implemented in the field of public media. In the complex interrelatedness of these major systems of human activity – architecture and communication, emerge opportunities for rethinking of the basics of measuring aesthetic value of visual artefacts and for obtaining answers about the prerequisites for social approval of the architectural work equally adequate since e.g. the time of the Gothic cathedral to the era of the Starchitects.

The theoretical contribution of the educational substance is highlighting the major asset of the interpretation “architecture as a media” – the reconciliation of main opposition of **form /function** which architects have concerned themselves with for centuries.

The structure of the text follows the logic of upgrading of related resulting topics – first of all it step on theories of architecture as text, as language and system of signs – architecture as communication and mass media. On the foundation of this general theoretical framework, some examples of contemporary tends in architecture are traced – like a real time scanning of a process. Underlining and inspiring these two systems of cultural production today – media and communication, an analytical concept is formulated: the identification of existing through history certain fundamental elements such as particular value systems, stages of consciousness, cultural perspectives and worldviews.

The body of the contents comprises five main thematic blocks:

- **Communication basics;**
  - What is communication? The Shannon/Weaver model. Introduction in Architectural Communication and structuring basic notions in the contemporary theory of communication with their architectural analogues. Communication theories and models, and their relation to the evolution of contemporary architecture. Architecture as perfect Mass Media – Umberto Eco’s model.

- **Elaboration of the elements and functions of architectural communication;**
  - Elements of communication – Addresser, Addressee, Channel, Message, Noise.

- Functions of Architectural Communication. The Opposition *Form/Function* in the structure of architectural communication.
-

- **The factors of prominence in the architectural professional field – the Addresser;**
  - The StarArchitects – phenomena of the Digital Era and the unlimited global media**.** Contemporary architectural mythologies of fame. Definition of the neologism “Starchitects”. History of the notion – were there architectural stars of Modernism?
    Basic characteristics and personality profile of the star in architecture. Women in architectural starship.
  - Factors of Fame in Architecture. How to become a Starchitect?

- **Contemporary communication protocols, imminent to the manifestations of architecture of the XXI c. as a urban space hypermedia**.
  - Media transformations of the urban space at the turn of the XXI c. and the fate of the traditional architectural image.

- **Conclusions.**

## CHOISE OF ANALYTICAL STANDPOINT

The conceptual milestone of the theoretical construction of the lecture course is the assumption that **architecture could be analytically approached as a system of communication** – a versatile research tool applicable to virtually all areas of human activity. As you know – one can't Not-communicate. All human activities are based on a mechanism of constant exchange of information – encoding, transferring and decoding it.

It is common for the practicing designer to be concerned with usual questions like: Why some buildings are deemed beautiful and others are not? Some last forever as intellectually meaningful, while others drop out of the erratic public attention like the fading shine of a tarnished gem. Why sometimes architecture is able to excite social consciousness for centuries, and sometimes remains hopelessly unnoticed? Also – are there any absolute rules to guide the path of searching for optimal architectural solution so that the final result is generally perceived as successful? Such concerns are constantly topical in the profession but today they become especially important, when all the traditional evaluation criteria have been questioned and the matters of quality and value are quite controversial in the huge pluralistic field of contemporary art production.

I believe that the choice of this particular analytical position – **to equalize architecture to a process of communication** could be a possible bridge that reveals to the theoretical and practical practices the prospects of locating the problems in the overall field of general humanities, where the universal truths of knowledge are synthesized. We should be ready more and more to situate architecture in the broad social and cultural context it belongs.

The preference of this selected scientific stand point here is not occasional. It is a logical result not only of the mediatic essence of architecture itself but also of the spirit of our time – the communication era. The idea is an intentional conceptualization of the matter of communication from an architectural point of view, followed by the examination of effective palpable operative communication predispositions of architecture itself. The aim of such an adventure is the exception of **eventual identical conditions of equilibrium of the architectural system, borrowed from the communicational ones, avoiding the bias of adhering to the radical scholastic compaction of the architectural phenomena in strictly mathematical, linguistic or any other analytical frameworks.**

## CONTEMPORARY MEDIA/ ARCHITECTURE CITY HYBRID

Through this specific filter of the analogy of architecture and communication, we would try to derive a better-focused picture of the incredible variety within the boundaries of the contemporary architectural production, looking for the codes of the imminent logic that defines it. Moreover that architecture of the last decades extended its traditional perimeter of competence to the extreme and unambiguously positioned itself as a hybrid entity in the light of the systems of communication, eventually converting into an **Urban Integrated Technological Inter-media** of its own right (Fig.1).

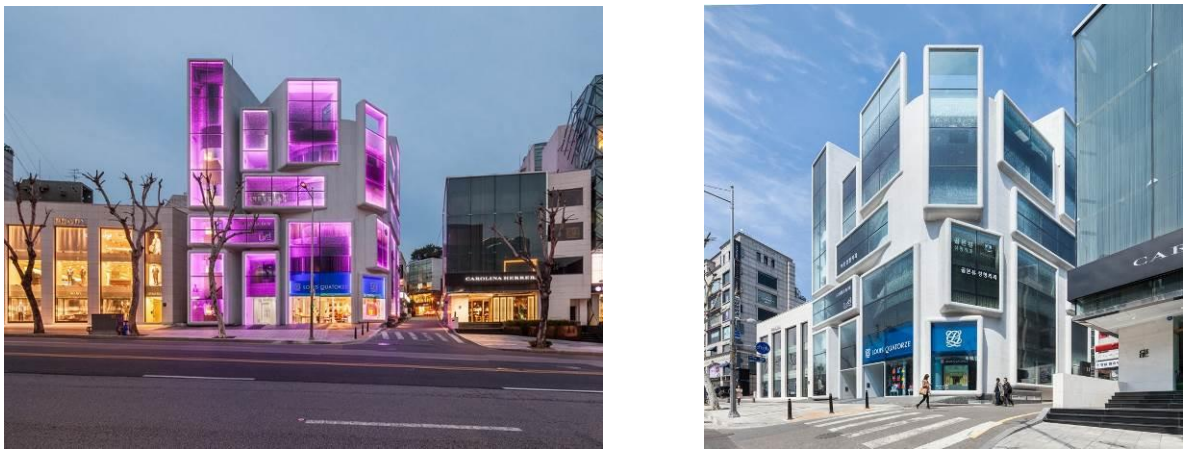


Fig.1. MVRDV, Gangam style building, Seoul, 2014

The contemporary production of the architectural vanguard owns its character not only to the reincarnations engendered by the invasion of the electronic media in the sphere of traditional art but to the fact that **architectural reality (a media reality of itself communicating through the dissemination of meaning)**, is undergoing a radical inherent transformation of representations, **provoked by its *own* communicative nature**. And externally catalyzed by the logic of the technological progress9 Fig.2).

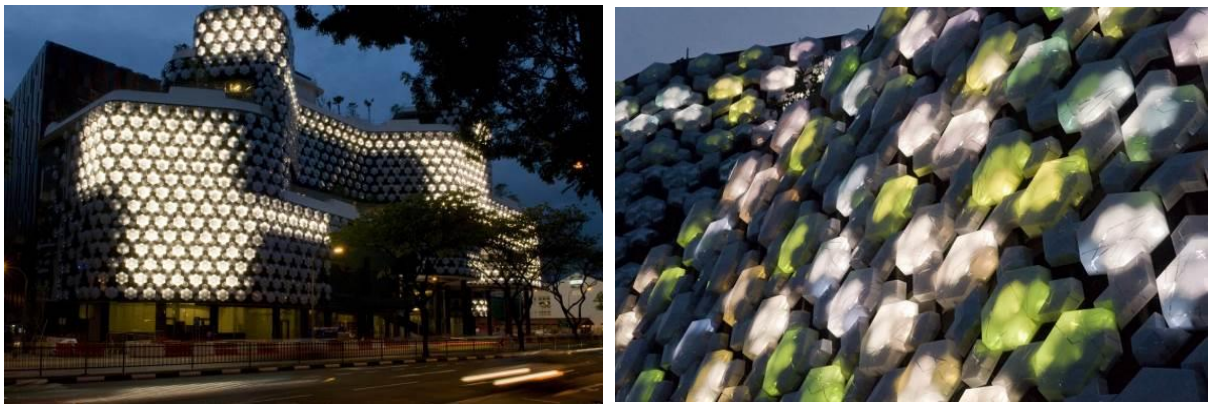


Fig.2.Illuma interactive media façade, Singapore

All the transformation trends which affected the essence of architecture so deeply were triggered by the massive accession of the modern media into the structure of the city as a grand urban show displayed on and by the buildings. Advertising luminous displays conquered the facades and practically invalidated their meaning and the strictly architectural veto over the visual character of the habitable environment. And trying to withstand and mitigate the consequences of this aggressive invasion and its own displacement, architecture mutated into a new monumental media hybrid. The buildings tend to convert into blended structures of mixtures of programs, advertising, technology and construction, into a kind of constructed situations. Events of experience (Fig.3).

Fig.3. Jacarta Worlds largest LED illuminated Media Façade, Seoul Square

We live in a world dominated by communication. It has saturated our lives and colonized culture. Mass media, a main means of communication, became a dominant form of omnipresence in reality, transforming the very essence of knowledge into aesthetic diffusive forms of expressiveness. It soundly established itself as most efficient instrument of the culture industry. The balance of the ratio **image/reality** has been changed rapidly and drastically, which has in fact been prophesized as early as the turn of the 20$^{th}$ century with the erosion of the borders between real and artistic, introduced by modernist abstraction. Besides a strict unchanging demarcating line between the spheres of fictional and non fictional is not easily discernable anyway. Every communication process could engender at a certain stage aesthetic and artistic qualities. But the mode of communication has changed – civilization is bombarded by images, produced and perceived in the matrix of new visual models in a new communicative situation of art consumption.

The palaces of Venice are covered by commercials; global space becomes an endless extended to infinity environment of flows – compressed virtual reality of

information flows (Fig.4.) Today the very space perception acquires new energy influenced by the raging abilities of the digital communications. No wonder the realm of the city became a **place for events**, constantly morphing in the materialization of its electronic contents (Fig.5

Fig.4. The Bridge of Sighs, Venice, 2010

Fig.5. Picadilly Circus, London, 2013

The city exists entangled within a network in an ever ongoing spatial continuity. It is not even a city anymore in the traditional sense it is a megapolis – a global web entity with specific local representations. New York resembles London much more than it resembles Chicago. Architecture cannot remain indifferent to the tendency.

The building acquired electronic nervous system, enabling it to react to the chances of the environment, getting closer to the definition of William Michel “a robot with foundations”, containing and distributing information. The entire building is near enough self-sufficient with solar panels on the roof, sun filters and various smart sensors to increase energy efficiency (Fig.6). In Sendai Mediateque Information Center, material structural flows are correlated and emphasized as vertical sheafs – simultaneously support and communication means (Fig.7).

Fig.6. Cloud, Media-Tec, Barcelona, 2011

Fig.7. T.Ito, Senday mediateque, 2000

Even the home, the very citadel of privacy, is conceptualized as a short pause in the digital information exchange. This sanctuary of architecture has been penetrated unobstructedly by the mighty communication immaterial and material wire drifts – the understanding of the correlation public/private is quite shaky today with the omnipresent Global Web in our homes. They became also containers and distributors of information, as Toyo Ito said in an interview (G.Stanishev, 2011). So architecture was compelled, in fact it hardly had any other choice but to participate in the **complex hybrid project of the total media influence.**

## ARCHITECTURE TELLS STORIES and is MEDIA

Talking about Communication – the notion is first of all to be understood as exchange of information, **telling and listening to stories** and architecture is a universal story teller. The scientific scope of scholarship, concerning architecture as a message – the meaning in architecture and the architectural ability to express and influence, is quite extensive. Forms arranged in space and inhabitable volumes tell stories and induce emotions. Juxtaposed, architectural objects also combine and convert into a time/space narrative – large scale monumental events, simultaneously denotative and connotative sign systems. They are subordinated to the conventions of visual representation of the current cultural situation, concerning the overall valid character and methods of signification. Building, for example are masking, use screens to hide behind, but today the masks are stepping in the role of monumental interfaces or QR codes (Fig.8-10). “Modernity is bound up with the question of the mask” (Colomina, 1996:23).

Fig.8. L.B. Alberti, s. Maria Novella, Florence, 1420

Fig.9. Greenprix Media Wall Beiling, 2008

Fig.10. MVRDV,QR building, Dijon, 2012

Because contemporary media and architecture are deployed and implemented in parallel, they are equally exposed to the invasion of contemporary technologies in their fields of activities. This circumstance additionally enhances process of consolidating the New media as a dominant communication power, polarizing the entire field of culture.

But architecture is ready, it is inclined to much more complicated behavior then just imitating more or less external cultural dynamics, it does not only receive, convert and utilize the communication mechanisms, influencing the current visual culture and perceived according to the conventions of the concrete civilizational cycle. Architecture today alters its intrinsic representational mode provoked by its **own innate communicative nature and mutates into a complex technological mediatic** multiformity. Today the architectural image could be reduced to, e.g. prints on glass walls. MVRDV offered an option of converting architecture into printed matter, **a media image of itself** (Fig.11).

Fig.11. MVRDV, the Glass Farm, Schijndrel, the Nethetlands, 2013, image @MVRDV, inhabitat.com

(*Schijndel's market square suffered badly from WWII bombing; the Glass Barn is MVRDV's seventh proposal for the site. The maximum envelope for the structure had the form of a traditional Schijndel farm. In collaboration with artist Frank van der*

*Salm all the remaining traditional farms in the area were photographed and a 'typical farm' developed. This image was printed onto the glass envelope that forms the entire façade. The Glass Farm is scaled 1.6 times larger to create a monument to the traditional building*.)

Architecture pronouncedly interacts with media but a necessary precondition of interaction is the existence of a **property of compatibility, of translatability if you will** between the agents and in the case of architecture **its innate ties of kinship with media** wire the process of osmosis. Makes it possible.

180 years ago in his legendary *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* Victor Hugo announces his famous prophesy: "This will destroy that" says his hero comparing the book on the table with the silhouette of the Gothic cathedral through the window. "The book will destroy the edifice". The history of mankind has been inscribed in buildings for centuries, the cathedral worked as a Bible of stone, architecture was the generic medium, the carrier of information, the main story-teller for the illegible medieval citizen. (Fig.12)

Fig.12. Details, exterior and interior Notre Dame de Paris, Paris

The cathedrals were the libraries of stone imagery. The biblical scenes were developed in the interior. And the terrifying lines uttered by archdeacon Claude Frollo, only meant that one until recently valid social medium was going to be substituted by another; that architecture is an traditional instrument of communication of values, whose social validity has been threatened to be diminished as a factor in human intellectual history. In literature architecture has been considered and labeled a mass medium of communication – communication of knowledge, a century and a half ago.

**MIXING REALITIES**

What happens today is that we are witnessing the result of a cause – turning to philosophy and Hegel we will find a universal explanation there – **every human reality must pass mediating environment of visualization and representation, and only through this medium it penetrates the soul and impacts the will**. This is how art works – it substitutes reality with its creations. And this is the main purpose, the main meaning of architecture – architecture creates artificial inhabitable realities parallel to nature. Mass media, on its own right, have ample opportunities for recreation, and a doubling of reality too, that is to say, its images can be easily converted into images that do not require to be perceived as images of reality itself, and for images that have independently primarily **artistic** importance. On this basis, the new media can easily achieve transformation in a world parallel to the real world. (*И*. Стефанов, 2004)

This is the intrinsic vocation of architecture – the organization of artificial worlds. On the level at which it "writes the libretto of habitation", it avails of the right to frame the living world, to control the relations between private and public spaces, to organize the conditions of habitation, architecture of all arts is delegated the responsibility to rethink ordinary reality, and to display it in a desired foreshortening, transcending órdinariness, improved by the mythological enigma of artistry (Fig.13).

Fig.13. Z.Hadid, Aliev Culture Center, Baku, 2013

*An alien object that has accidentally perched on its intergalactic route*.

Architecture and communication are two similar rule-based language games, they similarly intermingle the idea of real and imaginative in an alloy of material and virtual expressions. I will avoid stepping into the clarification of architecture-as-a-language debate – do we really communicate architecturally on a clearly linguistic basis and what is the nature of this communication. Which I consider the primary notion although today the notion ARCHITECTURE acquires much broader nuances of a meaning – like in IT or politics. AND ALSO – there is not at least to my knowledge a clear mutually accepted answer to the question WHAT IS LANGUAGE? In any case

they can both – architecture and communication, be equalized to a system comparable to a living organism, responding to the evolving environment. Remember Beaubourg in Paris (Centre Georges Pompidou), the high-tech landmark of French culture as an open uncovered architectural organism, skinless exhibitionistic demonstration of operational, also internal communication systems (Fig.14)

This is an architectural demonstration of internal communication – open biological circulation systems of the human body.

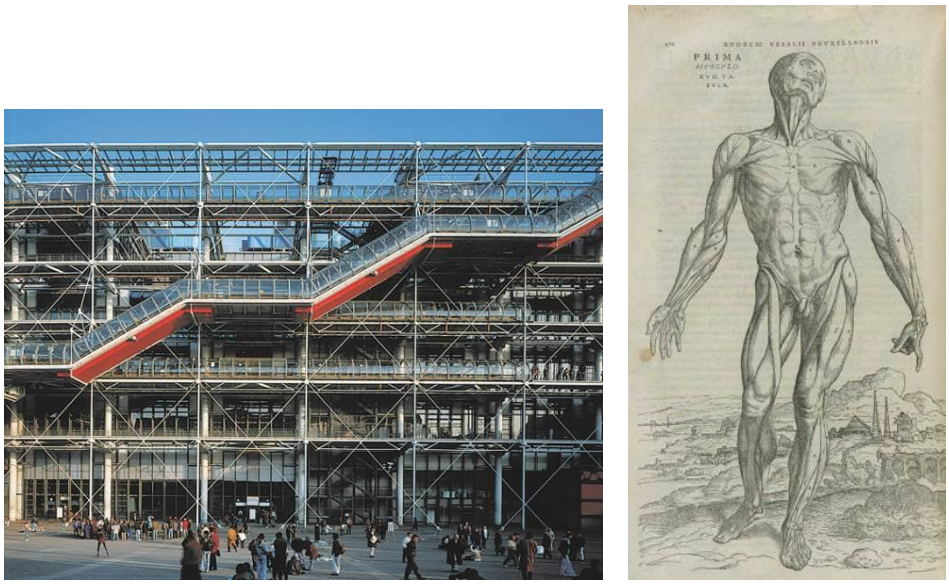



Fig.14. R.Piano, R.Rogers, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1971-1977, Paris, and Corporis Fabrica (1543).

## ARCHITECTURE AS PUBLIC MEDIA

Architecture is ambiguous, we are constantly balancing ambiguities when practicing and experiencing architecture. On the one hand, the building must indicate, communicate, exploit its function provided in the best way, and on the other – induce symbolic meaning, the core of the **cultural capital** of the architectural work. This is the essence that distinguishes mere construction from real architecture. It is indicative what Peter Eisenman once said: “To me, architecture begins once all the functions have been fulfilled”. (Rauterberg, 1998:41) Of course, quite arbitrary, because as we said, the saturation with values of the architectural artifact is inevitable – even the bare bulb in a blank interior organizes immediately a specific narrative the moment it is introduced. Man is ready to create and see signs in everything. The suggested meaning is never lost, but it might transform into

something different, acquire quite different interpretation that varies with time. Berlin Reichstag, which today we cite as an example of materialized idea of social values and democracy of the two united parts of a nation articulated architecturally, was in its time at the end of WW2 clearly a symbol of Nazi Germany (Fig. 37, 38).

Fig. 37. The Reichstaag, Berlin, 1945

Fig. 38. N. Foster, cupola reconstruction, 1999

Significant examples of architecture from socialism are most conspicuous of the mobility of the legitimate artistic symbolic interpretations. Citadels of socialist unity 50 years ago, their fate is subject of heated debates today – on the one hand the desire grows to remove them as an eerie reminder of a bankrupt ideology , and on the other – ideological bias and nostalgia for the past, to keep them. But as a rule, not only Socialism could be an example, after the collapse of any regime the buildings that glorified it are subject to execution from its victorious successor, as an act of symbolic effacement of a negated ideological or social model (Fig.39).

Should buildings be carriers of political guilt is an argument that we can trace back to the demolition of the Bastille and it is one of the most significant proofs of the architecture's ability to communicate and provoke societies symbolically. An ability so powerful that often becomes self-destructive (Fig.40).

Fig. 39. Plunder of the Mauzoleum in Sofia, 1999

Fig.40.Demolition of the Bastille, 1789

Basing on this platform to see architecture as a type of communicative medium – means of transmission of signs and images, we can percept the urban environment as an instrument of public dissemination of information and finally – as a perfect mass medium.

And also one of the "most powerful"at that according to Dejan Sudjic. (Sudjic, 2005) In his essay "Architecture as mass communication, mass appeal in Architecture" Umberto Eco systematized in several points that analogy and formulated a schematic, but convincing relationship of similarity between the two spheres of communicative activity. These similarities problematizing architecture as a means of mass communication, easily find reasons even when most superficially observed. In detail they look like this:

- **"Architectural "discourse" generally *aims at mass appeal*;** it starts with accepted premises, builds upon them well-known or readily acceptable 'arguments', and thereby elicits a certain type of consent" (Eco, 1997:195). It is in most respects something we are already familiar with and the differences involved only represent a welcome improvement or variation of some kind. We all have an idea how a beautiful building should look like, like a beautiful woman. And most people feel architects even without a special education.

- **"Architectural discourse is *psychologically persuasive*:** with a gentle hand (even if one is not aware of this as a form of manipulation) one is promoted to follow the instructions, implicit in an architectural message; functions are not only signified but also prompted and induced, just as certain products and attitudes are prompted through "hidden persuaders", sexual associations"(Eco, 1997:1996) in commercial advertising. The mechanism is identical, people are driven to behave in a certain way.

- **"Architectural discourse is *experienced inattentively*, in the same way in which we experience the discourse of movies and television, the comics or advertising** – not that is, in the way in which one is meant to experience the works of art and other more demanding messages, which call for concentration, absorption, whole hearted interest in interpreting the message, interest in the intentions of the addresser" (Eco, 1997:196). This is not what happens perceiving the architectural product. Buildings are always around and people percept them as a background. This mindset is undergoing a transformation with the invasion of the iconic buildings of the last decades which provoke millions of visitors to travel to unknown destinations in order to see them.

- **"Architectural messages *can never be interpreted in an aberrant way***, and without the addressee being aware of thereby perverting them. Most of us

would have some sense of being engaged in a perversion of the object if we are to use the Venus of Milo for erotic purposes or religious vestments as dustcloths, but we use the cover of an elevated roadway for getting out of the rain or hang laundry to dry over a railing and we see no perversion in this" (Eco, 1997:196). Just practicality.

- "Thus **architecture fluctuates between *being rather coercive,* implying that you will live in such and such a way with it, and *rather indifferent"*** (Eco, 1997:196)**,** letting you use it as you feel appropriate.

- **"Architecture *belongs to the realm of everyday life*** just like pop music and most ready-to wear-clothing, instead of being set apart, distant like"serious" music and high fashion" (Eco, 1997:196). Although the works of the contemporary stararchitects are exceptional, not easy to decipher at first glance. They are the "fashion kings" today.

- **"Architecture is *a business*.** It is produced under economic conditions very similar to the ones governing much of mass culture, and in this too differs from other forms of culture. Painters may deal with galleries, and writers with publishers, but for the most part that has to do with their livelihood and need does not have anything to do with what they find themselves painting or writing; the painter can also pursue painting independently, perhaps while making a living in some other way, and the writer can produce works for which there is no market, perhaps with no thought of having them published, but the architect cannot be engaged in the practice of architecture without inserting himself into a given economy and technology and trying to embrace the logic he finds there, even when he would like to contest it" (Eco, 1997:196).

## ARCHITECTURAL MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

There are a number of suitable communication theories that can shed light on the contemporary evolution of architecture basing on the essence of communication, moderating the complex ambiguous nature of the former with all its metaphorical implications.

Now it seems reasonable to formulate what communication is although practically everybody is sure of his clear understanding of the notion – that it is something so familiar and obvious, which is the case with the attitude towards architecture too. We live among it and we are all have a definite opinion of what it might be.

Although the communication studies form  a comparatively new theoretical area, the practice of defining communication is so widespread that even about 1976 Dance and Larson, renowned communication theorists, reported over 126 definitions proposed by the relevant literature (Miller, 2002). Apart from this there is a substantial variety of communication models too.

One suitable definition, suitable for the specific analytical analogy is:

**Communication is a deliberate social interaction carried out through the exchange of symbols and signs in varying social contexts. This is an interactive process - symbolic interaction creates an opportunity through the exchange of information to coordinate with each other and as a consequence to affect the environmental balance** (Петев, 2012:15 ).

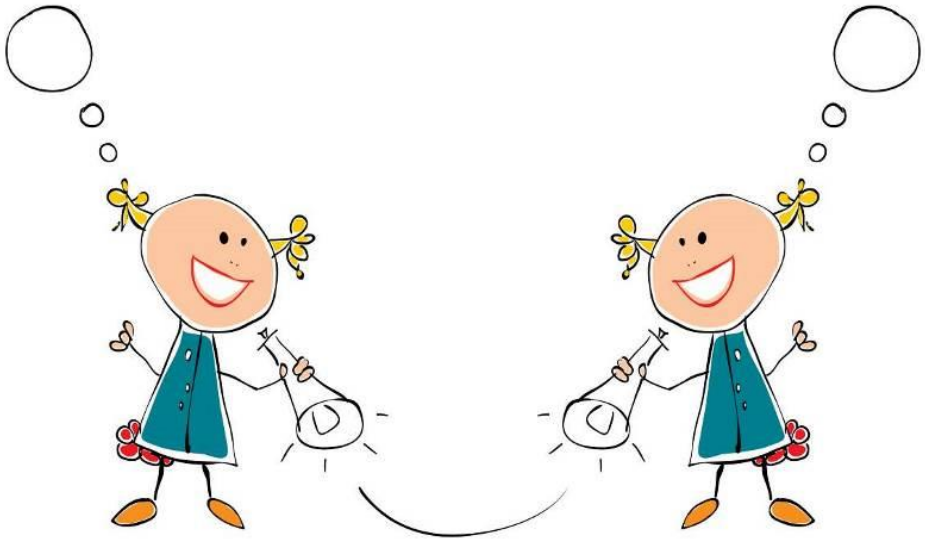


Fig.15. Communication

The choice of a communication model for this concrete analysis is the scheme of the classical Shannon Weaver Model of information of 1949 (Fig.16). I have selected it from all possible choices – first, due to its popularity and second, due to its universal instrumentality serving optimally the purposes of the particular observation. It is equally simplified and thorough to the most adequate to my purposes degree. Shannon and Weaver were two American researchers – a mathematician and a communication engineer.

The model follows a simple process line – starts with an **initiator of a message** of some kind, the message encoded and directed through a channel and then consequently decoded and received at its final destination – the recipient. This process is as a rule accompanied by possible noise sources blurring the clarity of the information transferred. The principle of this model is basically that **all communication is by nature analogous to a phone call,** structured by the same factor elements as source, channel, message, noise, etc. The model is a useful stylization of a protean process of converse, deprived of any deceitful complementary overlays.

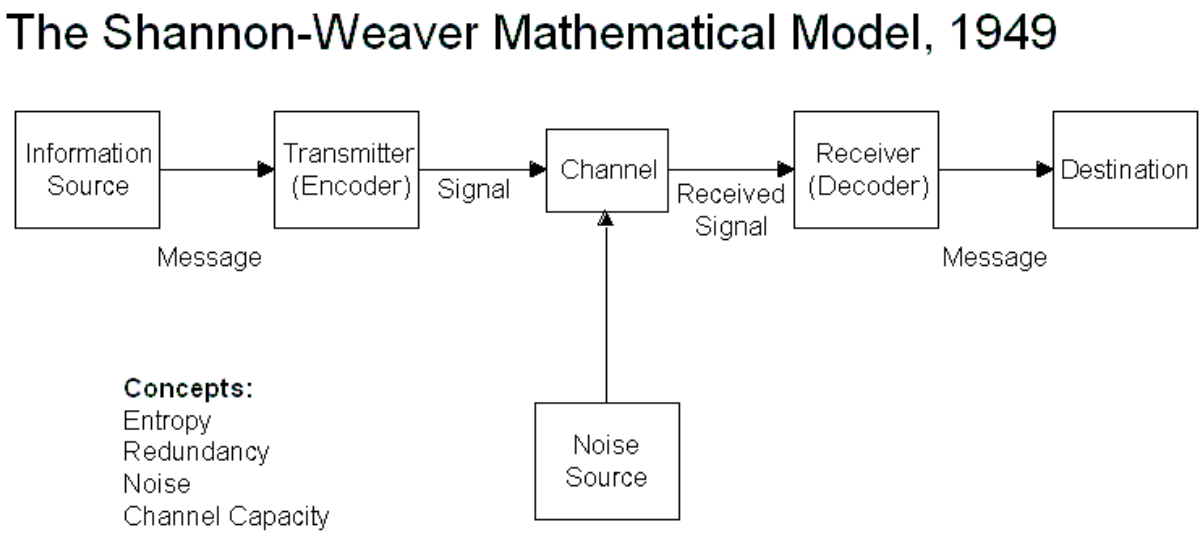
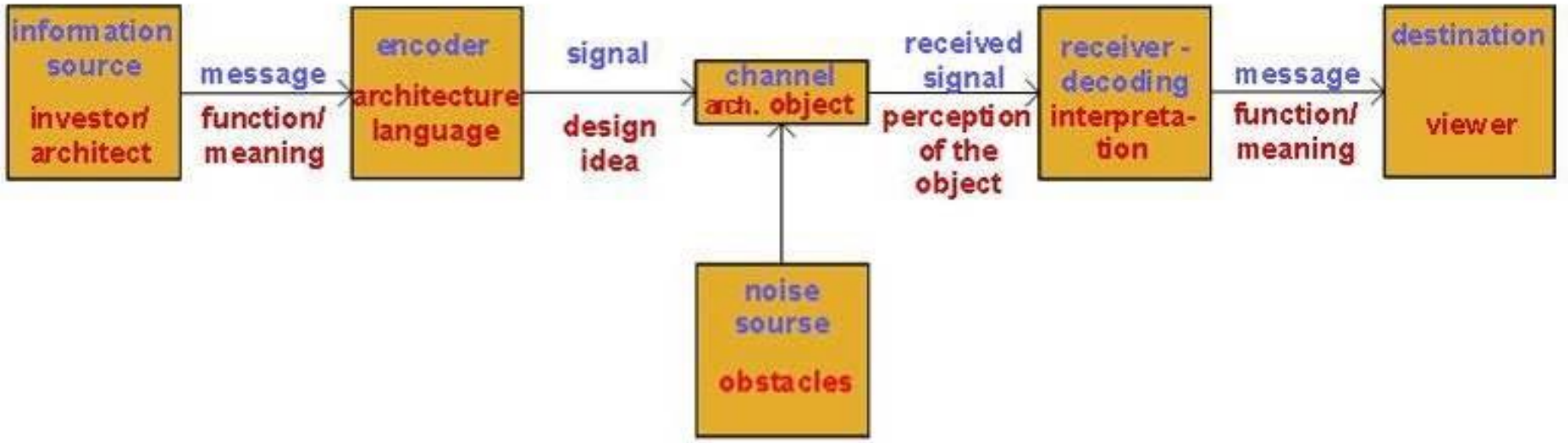



Fig.16.The Shannon/Weaver mathematical model


information source
investor/ architect
message
function/ meaning
encoder
architecture language
signal
design idea
channel
arch. object
noise sourse
obstacles
received signal
perception of the object
receiver - decoding
interpreta- tion
message
function/ meaning
destination
viewer

Next step the model is interpolated in its architectural embodiment, as part of the theoretical concept, which I have broadly developed in my book *Architecture as Communication* (Диамандиева, 2014). It is not difficult to identify even quite superficially analogously related elements in both fields – architecture and communication. The way we create and perceive architecture is a clear communicative process. This model successfully schematizes the process of architectural communication, and cultural, artistic communication in general, also could serve at a second observation level as a reflection of the complex impact of communication technologies in the field of humanities.

As we can see the elements of architectural communication arefollowing the elements of the model (Fig.18):

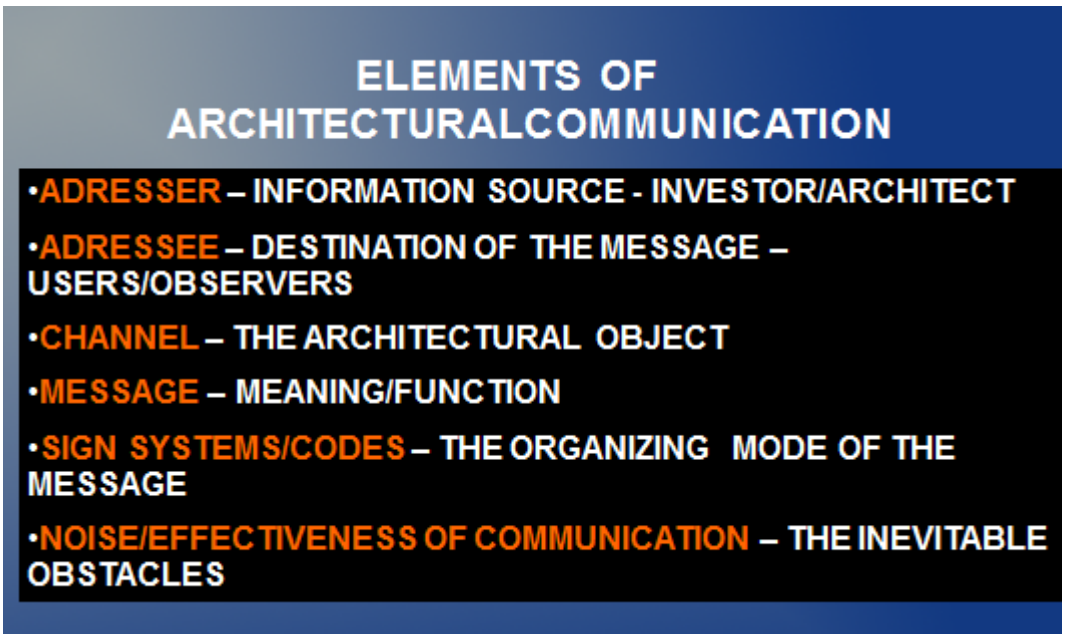



Fig.18. Elements of architectural communication

**THE FUNCTIONS OF ARCHITECTURAL COMMUNICATION**

The functions of architectural communication are central for the communication model. They are to be discerned and observed in the context of the intrinsic architectural ambiguity, and structured by the opposition of **two broadly outlined problematic areas**.

Architecture combines mutually-exclusive and dialectically united characteristics - the ubiquitous binary oppositions – such as *material and spiritual, creativity and*

*pragmatism*, *commodity and utopia, form and function*, intertwined in a delicate balance and endless disputes for superiority. The history of architecture in fact somehow could be acknowledged as a space-time fluctuation between these two extremes, which from a communicational point of view are the two parts of one indivisible whole, sharing a common communicative nature. The recognition of this communicative nature in fact reconciles the opposition.

1. **UTILITY – the primary function of architectural communication**.

Well known and broadly shared is the claim that architectural objects are primarily designed to **function**, providing conditions for carrying out all sorts of human activities, ensuring the survival of the human species. And as a secondary function they are to eventually **communicate meaning**. We are not going to argue the consistency in principle of this statement – yes, buildings should provide prerequisites for safe and decent habitation. But our scientific stand point here enables us to see the two sides of the oppositions so common as two parts of an equation. Because the inherent functionality of the architectural object is in fact a form of communication of its own right. Even the most normative, modest and banal architectural fact, deprived of any hint of a claim for aesthetic value, starts to disseminate messages as an accomplished communication system the very moment it appears as a visible artifact in the habitable space.

If we take some of the most illustrative examples of modern architecture – Adolf Loos's most minimalist design (Fig.19).

Fig.19. A. Loos, villa Muler, Prague, 1928

Decrying the ornament and in general any kind of decoration as a sign of degeneracy, he proclaimed as the only possible architectural approach pragmatic reasoning. – "The lack of ornament is a sign of intelectual power" (Colomina,

1996:35). He aimed at total deliberate exterior impossibility of communication in his buildings.

But did it happen in reality?

**A)** First of all, the act of constitution in space of a particular architectural volume compares, juxtaposing it within the existing environment and the object directly connects, respects it or in some cases rejects it. **It is already performs a form of communication, starts a dialogue**. It could be a good practice or not, successful achievement or an outright failure, but it inevitably establishes itself in the existing ambience as an integral, relatively long-term reality of its own right. The building begins to function in an ensemble, participates in hierarchies dominated or overwhelmed by its environment, tearing down or contributing to existing volumes, closing views and overshadowing surfaces or framing and highlighting certain accents. Not in vain some theorists account the general nature of the architecture in terms of space **as a correlation process – a juxtaposition** (von Meiss, 1990)**.** There are numerous examples (Fig.20, 21).

Fig.20. Libeskind, Museum of War History Dresden, 2011

Fig.21. Simpson, Beetham tower, Manchester, 2006

Fig.22. Designhouse, Hotel viura, Rioja Alavesa, 2010

The architect can also choose the artistic approach of conformism and contextualism, complete stylistic immersion of volumes in the outgoing nature of urbanized context in various ways, according to a range of conditions – cultural, historical, regional, intellectual, and basically dependent on the extent of his creative potential.

This four-star hotel in Spain is designed as a definitely modern building with an almost De Stijl purity of the planes, avoiding the blatant imitation of the clutter of the vernacular Mediterranean style of the surroundings. While the scale of the constituent volumes, the amicable lopsided forms and their freedom in positioning, the range of colors on the facades naturally implants the new architecture into the existing traditional environment. This is a true intellectual nod to the philosophy and spirit of place (Genius Loci). So a contemporary building is cleanly and elegantly introduced as a character in the medieval architectural milieu of this wine region in Spain, without violating or impersonating it, and yet it is conspicuously different, avoiding the impotence of a literal copy ( Fig.22).

**B)** Another consideration is that architectural space communicates with its users in an operative mode too. It should be able to successfully sign and advise ways for unobstructed utilization of the specific areas as a condition for the optimal functioning of the building, which practically means nothing other but **effective architectural communication.**

Utilitarian function is communication of separate parts within an assembly. For example, the organization of the entrance area of high-rise buildings shall provide direct access to vertical communication. The requirement is essential to the functioning of the edifice as an operative system and simultaneously is its straightforward form of delivery of information (how the building functions vertically) or this is a true mode of visual communication (Fig.23).

Fig.23. Stairs in hotel lobbies

The fictional levels of communication are numerous; they include also the subconscious **cultural predisposition** of the communicating parties, which is an integral part of the communication patterns. “We don’t see things as they are, we see

what we are” wrote Anais Nin (“The Seduction of the Minotaur”, 1961). Architectural object communicates, unlocking functional experience – we know in advance that through the door we can go outside or get inside, we know what we can expect from a door. It represents the idea of transition, of getting through – in space and time. Going through the door means a transition, an intermediate condition, middle life. Even the famous allegory of the door in the field, where it is senseless, can always be circumvented and avoided it still rings a bell of passing through and access (Fig. 24).

Fig.24. Door in the field

This is the mechanism how the simple functional element transforms into an architectural symbol and a sign of some abstract meaning – of border, change and transformation in this case. The source function determining generatively the form might be lost, but the shape and symbolism of the functional contents remain serving communicative purposes.

"Beauty in art is just "forgotten utility” writes Valentin Angelov (Ангелов, 2004:22). Architectural objects are fully operational systems thanks to a rich set of communication history.

**C)** And third – architectural objects are cast to their unlimited audience, to the mercy of these audiences, according to Charles Jencks (Jencks, 1969) – the "showroom" of the art of architecture is huge. Spiritualized by their stories and dialogues, buildings are presented with their mass and volumes in environments inhabited by people and they are engaged in an everlasting intercourse, influencing each other, communicating, even if the architectural artifact has not been initially designed as a special object of observation. And in result, as a social phenomenon as Winston Churchill once said – „We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us“ (House of Commons (meeting in the House of Lords), 28 October 1943). Built volumes in space emit information – they suggest better or worse (sometimes quite literally) stories about various human impulses. Buildings could tell stories about their FUNCTION (Fig. 25), HISTORY (Fig.26), USERS (Fig.27.), DESIGNERS (Fig.28), etc.

Fig.25. Rialto Bridge, Venice

Orthodox church, XII-XIV c., Nesebar

Fig.26. Monument of comunist party, Bulgaria

The cathedral of Milan

Fig.27.Cambridge, King's college

Barn in Velichkovo, Bulgaria

Fig.28. Walt Disney concert hall, L.A.

L. Bernini's colonnades, St. Peter's square

What we are mainly concentrating on here is the architectural image. The conceptual issue should the building communicate its function wholeheartedly in its exterior still remains open – we remember the imperviousness and detachment, intellectual restraint, which was inherent to the philosophy of expressiveness of Early Modernism, the architecture of Adolf Loos that we mentioned before, or Hanes Meyer, who strived for architecture, which expressed nothing (Fig. 29).

Fig.29. H. Meyer, Dessau, 1930

Fig.30. J. Outram, Pump Station, London, 1988

Simplest of simplest of abstraction. As if in compensation, Postmodernism as a successor of this style brought radical revisions to the rules of the *blank face*. The architectural image of abstract flatness fiddled in carnival incarnations of Postmodernism and the buildings were given the right to participate in a spatial masquerade in which the formal language, not just could possibly “shout”, " or remain silent", it could directly "mislead" expressing meaning (Fig. 30). Department stores were transformed into medieval rows of houses, and underground ventilation shafts into pocket size Palladian villas (Habermass, p.234).

Fig.31. Ladders – M. Fuksas, Armany shop, NY, 2009 and Michelangelo, Laurencin library, Florence, XVI c.

So this so called “**UTILITARIAN FUNCTION**” we have been talking about **is** a form of communication of its own right. The success of its deployment is the prerequisite of the optimal functioning of the architectural object. For example, the ladder looks like a ladder and users know that it is means to overcome floors (Fig.31). The object communicates visually its function and those who enjoy participating in this spatial dialogue, obey the designation of a specific form – for example, step height, width of shoulder, texture of the materials, handle height, etc. These are arbitrary conditionalities people have to take into consideration, to use the ladder according to the way it instructs them to and allows them to do.

In this perspective, the architectural utilitarian aspect is effectively communicative. But as Roland Barthes writes, "use (utilitarian purpose - author) never does anything but shelter meaning " (Bartes, 1997:166).

When we accept to understand the utilitarian function in architecture as communication, we are granted the chance to study and comprehend both fields – architecture and communication, better (Eco, 1989).

## 2. CULTURE – the secondary function of architectural communication.

So the public object, architectural object in this case, is related to sociocultural demands through utility (Mill, 1973:113). But human needs are not limited to satisfying the primary utilitarian necessities only. Anthropologist George Mills ("Anthropology and Art") discerns two major operative aspects of art – its "utilitarianism" and its "function". It is important to keep in mind the distinction between them and how are these two facts related to each other. The first concerns the direct utilitarian needs, which could be, for example, to shelter a symphony orchestra. This can be done in any comparatively appropriate space, even in a barn (Fig. 32).

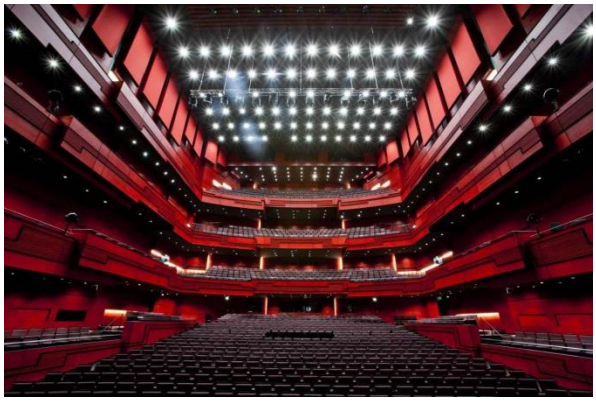


Fig.32. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in a weat barn  Fig.33. H. Larsen, Harpa Concert Hall, Reykijavic, 2012

But people aspire to something more in their habitable spaces, to the totality of the experience, and concert halls around the world look differently (Fig.33). The term "function" in this case is used in its sense of cultural functions of the building and a synthetic concept, with a different meaning from direct "use" in the trivial sense. This is a quality that stands out and appeals to be understood and appreciated – the magnet that accretes cultural value of the architectural work. “Utility is a matter of entering into action, while function is entering into awareness”. Of empathy, of understanding. Contemplating, as Mill says (Mill, 1973).

Aiming at this type of value, architecture is conceptualizing significance, identification of marks of uniqueness, and ensuring maximum impact on the audience of users and viewers or – it is conceptualizing **optimal communication.** The goals might be various – from a demonstration of power to the effect of propaganda of certain ideas or political doctrine. Or any kind of human impulses one can think of. In this respect the architecture of Nazism is an eloquent example and in general, the architecture of totalitarian regimes as a rule. Heavy unyielding severity of massive buildings with nationalist flavor exercise additional oppressive effect as timeless monoliths, repeating to infinity surfaces and volumes – as if a replica of the numerous faceless devoted to repressive state apparatus. Facades with myriad of uniform openings evoke associations of marching soldiers and unmistakably prompt the idea of total submission (Fig.34).

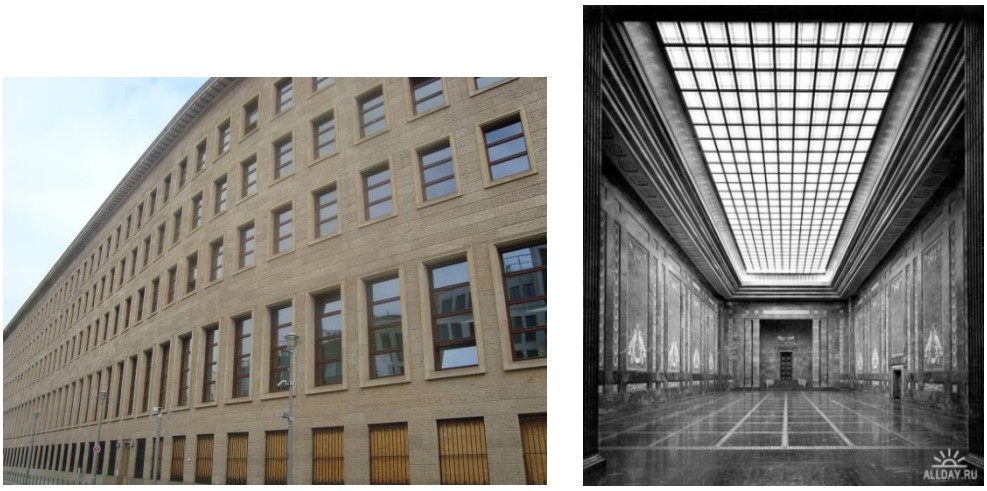



Fig.34. Reich bank and Chancellery, Berlin

The Nature of architectural communication and of art in general, is rationalized on prevalently spiritual, symbolic and in this sense, **nonutilitarian grounds**, assuming the hypothesis that archaic sacred festival for celebration of divine elements of nature is the prehistoric paradigm, origin of art.  All the known forms of expression of the spirituality of the ancient people must have been intertwined in an inseparable

unity, rooted deeply into this kind of transcendental experience, this Dionysian ecstatic ritual (Nietzsche, in Leddy, 1999). And quite naturally the holy festival required its sacred space to be developed in. This sacred space, the space of the temple, communicating symbols, is the true proto-form of architectural space. It is the real eternal target and object of architecture, not so much the practicality of habitation. Not in vain in the millennial history of culture vestiges of temples are much more common than of residential buildings. Because this is the focus on which the emphasis had been placed through the centuries and everything expensive and durable, the most technologically advanced, available to the ancient builders had been implemented. The space of communion, encounter with God is transformed into a sign of God, sealed forever in the generative civilizational memory as an expression of spirit. Although devoid of deliberate spiritualism and pursuit of sublime heights of spiritual conditions, most recent examples of avant garde architectural production are not inferior as far as capacity of emotional influence is concerned, dragging their audience into an endless narrative of special experiences and interte xtuality (Fig. 35, 36).

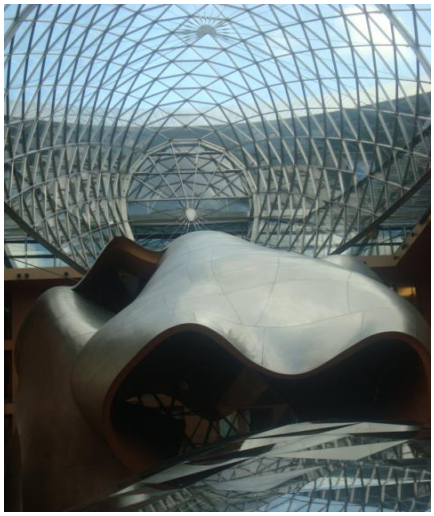


Fig.35. Fr. Gehry, DB Berlin, 2001 Fig.36. Z. Hadid, Sackler's pavilion, 2013

Repercussions of pure expression as factors in architectural communication are inexhaustible sources of information – man is amazingly sensitive to artistic suggestions, ready to perceive and accept their messages directly and unquestioned.

In conclusion – **Accepting architecture as a form of communication predisposes the balance between the poles of the fundamental contradiction between *form and function*. It becomes a synthesis of two general inseparable and indivisible mechanically facts, being both two separate forms of communication.**

## THE ARCHITECT - ADDRESSER

One of the most mediatic representations of contemporary architecture is the phenomenon of the star architects. They will in fact stand for us as the first of the elements of the architectural model of communication, or at least the one half of it of **the initiator, the addresser** of architectural communication.

In the architect / investor-tango as Jean Nouvel calls it, (architecture is like tango) the architect is the mediator, interpreter, who converts imaginary communicative intentions of the investor into tangible material expressions. Whose is the rhetoric of the architectural object then – of the client commissioning or of the architect? Ostensibly it seems that the role of the architect is limited to simple encoding, converting into architectural appearance of a somebody else's message, giving form to the intentions of the client – often shadowy and confused**,** but in the process of this coding the designer inevitably charges the contents with his own creative interpretations. Interpretation – this is what the language of architecture basically is.

So the architect forms and imbues the conceptual meaning of the message. New contents are injected into the initial structuring canvas of the design. And this specific intellectual content enables the architectural object at a certain stage "to exists independently of the one who pays for it ". (Sudjic, 2005 : 6) Although the meaning of the final message is proceeded as a collective effort. This confirms the architect initially in the position of the addresser, notwithstanding the nuances of double meaning and mobility of the appeal. Ambiguity is inherent to architecture as we said – it is not for granted that anything happening in its magical world is exactly what it seems to be.

Talking about stars in architecture – the peak of the profession, the vanguard of the last decades – the sense of this neologism as it has been formulated, "star architect" means an architect, with the status of a star from the show business, a celebrity. It is a notion regarded quite incompatible with the profession until pretty soon. It was not habitual for the architects to be as famous as Johnny Depp or Justine Timberlake, the essence of the field of architecture did not presume it (Fig.41).

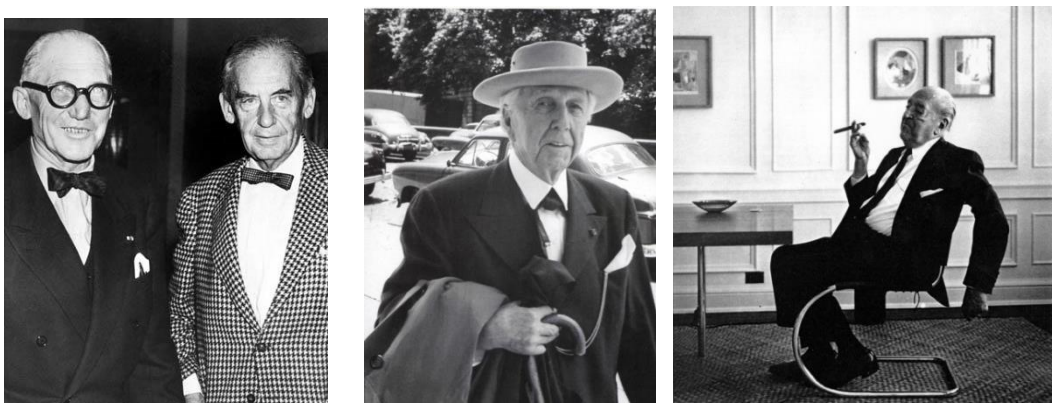


Fig.41.The "icons" of Modern architecture

Before just a single generation of architects, the professional field was comparatively stiff and specialized. Except for a few iconic names, especially from the period of the avant-garde of Modernism, the architects used to be comparatively anonymous.

Even today the term “star”, applied to an architect, shares a metaphorical or comparative aftertaste and basically implies a professional degree of importance and popularity. But the scale of fame the architectural celebrities avail of, is incomparable to that of the show business stars. Their public presentations are not attacked by crowds of fans of course, and their fees are also relatively modest in a Hollywood scale. Notwithstanding these facts the cotemporary high-ranked architects resemble the worlds’ superstars by nature and in manifestations.

Architecture at the beginning of the XXI century proved itself to be the only plastic art with a really popular vanguard. The names of the famous architects are well presented in the public space and are quite familiar to the audience – much better than the renowned representatives of other art genres – Damien Hirst may be the artist, most highly paid in the world but for sure the name of Norman Foster is far more popular in general terms. Competing with celebrities from various fields of British social life in the sphere of art, including Joan Rolling, the author of “Harry Potter”, in 2008, Norman Foster has been granted the first price in “Britain’s Best” 2008 in UK. In the same year the rating of the *Time* magazine of the most influential persons of the year was headed by Rem Koolhaas.

The contemporary architectural elite and its production situated itself in the lights of the ramp, not as an occasional sensation but in its quality of specific representation of the culture of popularity and gained a stable position in the very focus of the media space. The first decade of the third millennium was the time when the culture of the architectural celebrities became common as an environment, in which the person of the architect has been modeled into a **consciously cultivated individuality by the media.**

Fig.42. “The B-Side, The Zaha/Gaga Divide”

It would not have been possible without the logic of the conditions of the relevant socio cultural trends, circumstances and necessities, inherent to the genesis of architectural creativity. **Media** – a product of modern culture, and **architecture** – born in pre-history, demonstrated a multilateral symbiosis and became dependant on each other more than ever "The club of the starchitects" occupied its dominant position, similar to the dozen movie stars, illuminating Hollywood today. Zaha Hadid id being compared with Lady Gaga(Barton, Gem, The B-Side, The Zaha/Gaga Divide) (Fig.42). And with some reason as far as origin, behavior and glory are concerned.

Within the lifetime of a single architectural generation, the starchitecture settled down as the most remarkable event in the architectural profession and defined itself as a specific cultural construct. The repertoire of the vanguard of world architecture, as a special collection of individualities and the accompanying discourse, announced the establishment of a new **cultural religion, presented by the iconic buildings,** which inhabited profusely the civilized world. This circumstance catalyzed the necessity of analyzing the most recent architectural manifestations in views of the generative correlation **architecture/culture.** In cause/consequence aspect, both sides of the correlation are bilaterally bound – the one causes, presents and results from the other and vise versa. The architecture of the last decades indicates clearly that it should be **scrutinized in its essence of a cultural process**. The only option to evaluate it in its complete coherent integrity is to explore it as a phenomenum of **culture**, within the boundless context of the inherent cultural panorama of conditions. Contemporary architectural theory is open to this observation approach. The universality and complexity of a cultural entity is the status that could ensure comparative stability of the validity of architecture as a discipline, and as an Institution of major social influence.

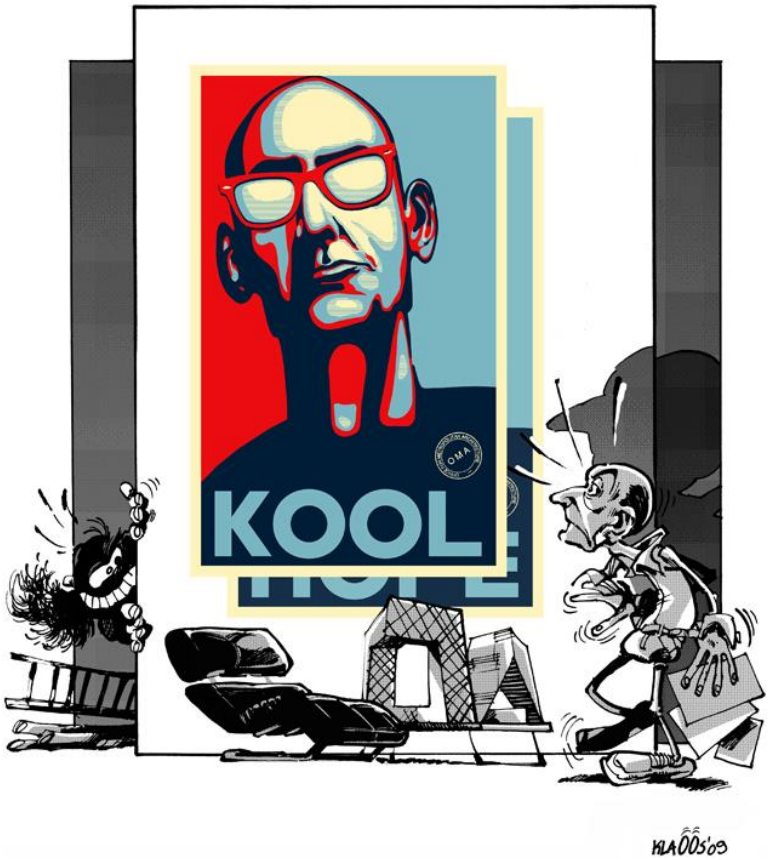
The iconic creations of contemporary starchitects appeared as embodiment of these artistic tendencies. Their total lack of ideological design program as if serves as an alternative, compensating for the apostolic zeal of the pioneers of Modernism, who, trying to investigate social salvation means through architecture, estranged architecture from the world of art. The presence and specificity of such a prominent extraordinary vanguard in the period of transition between the two millennia evokes and inspires the need for observation of the generic characteristics that define it. The questions waiting for mandatory clarification sound approximately as follows:

- Is the star architect really producing pure vanity, hollow elevations with nothing behind them, whose only purpose is generation of ecstatic experience and colossal profits;
- Is it true that only the Image is what matters and what they (the starchitetcs) create is just an autistic architecture, alien to the environment, in which it is practically catapulted, meant explicitly to enhance the reputation of its "genius creator";

- Is the phenomenon star-architect to be perceived as a blatant syndrome of the sensational and the aggressive, attracting attention, the different, because of the mere idea of difference, always, at any price, which conquered the cities of the world in a huge invasion and turned them into grand spectacle of architectural ego…

And also the rest of the analytical aspects of the logic, which proved the architectural titans of today legitimate – how they outperform their professional competitors and **what is the character of the selective mechanism which converts the ordinary architect into a star.**

The iconic buildings of the star architects signified the world cities, as symbols which deserve to be read. The fact that the field of architecture decorated itself with stars, should be apprehended **as a materialization of complex dynamics, inherent to culture and not just as simple curious facts from the pages of the popular editions.** The research of the constitution of the phenomenon, its evolution and artistic and cultural essence are the collateral but structurally determinative alternatives of the observation on the cultural status of architecture and its disposition in the semantic field of **contemporary mythologies of fame**.



## THE PHENOMENON STAR ARCHITECT

### 1. Definition

The star architect is a contemporary western socio-cultural phenomenon. It emerged as an almost messiah's promise of new architecture, actively supported by the world media. The meaning of the notion refers to world-scale architects-designers, whose work has been awarded wide popularity and massive public approval. These circumstances transform the image of the concrete personalities into specific idols of the architectural world, perceived by the mass audience as celebrities. The "star" status is usually associated with the idea of the avant-garde, the new and unique. The iconic buildings of the star architects glitter in the mega-polices of contemporary Western Europe and USA, as well as in cities of the gradually gaining might economies of Far and Middle East (Fig.43).

Fig.43. N. Foster, R. Rogers, R. Piano 2015

Fig.44. Z.Hadid, Galaxy Soho, Beijing, London, 2013

Investors from all over the world are aspiring to contracts with the top talents. The mere fact that the design work of a certain project belongs to some of them becomes the authoritative precondition for the potential success of the investment, at least as far as its degree of popularity is concerned. To hire a Prizker-Prize winner as an architect unconditionally raises the selling price of the building per sq.m. During the last decade, the designing and construction of such a building have turned into a conspicuous principle of incorporating also the city it has been performed in, into the special elitist circle of places in the world with high cultural reputation. This is the so called "Bilbao effect" – revival of desolated urban areas by introduction of cutting edge architecture. The museum "Solomon Guggenheim" in the land of the Basques, designed by Frank Gehry back in the 1990's brought millions of visitors the first year

after the construction. And the exposition offered was not the main goal of the visitors, the architecture of the building was the major attraction (Fig.45).

Fig.45. Fr. Gehry, “Solomon Guggenheim” museum, Bilbao, Spain, 1997

As a detail, the commission of a modern Western architect from the class of the most prominent could even be based on political considerations – a detail, which eventually reconsiders the correlation architecture/politics within the moral conspectus of the society.

The process of generation, utilization and interpretation of space in architecture is part of the common attitude towards the overall heterogenic space, which absorbs and dissolves the elementary categories it consists of. In result an overall integral entity remains and matters. The professional ambitions of the architects and their personal self-conceit melt into the complex mixture of complex overlapping swirls of processes and circumstances, which moderate and determine the final appearances and effects of the architectural space. Apart from its various forms of behavior, contemporary architecture remains **essentially a complex interpretation of social life**, not only because architecture is specifically social but because it is generally part of the genetic commitment of social forces and artistic movements. The *sign-architects* rose equally **as product and instrument** of these processes, which manifest and simultaneously model the essence of their imminent cultural self.

It is only logical that the interest to the phenomenon star-architect provoked the discourse on the cultural and civilization conditions, which made it possible. The names of the architects evolved from anonymity, they metaphorically declined from their Olympus and the story about them became common knowledge, with their directly discernable stiles and guaranteed stone and glass originality. Contemporary architects superstars are not the marble idols of the profession, exceptionally isolated in their architectural towers. Within the free interpretation of modern mass media, they gained personal popularity almost equal to the level of fame of their distinguished production. They do not seem to hesitate to operate not only in the sphere of construction of buildings but also readily get involved in various types of product design, design of shoes, dishes, furniture, incl. even food forms in an elite culinary show (Fig.46, 47,48).

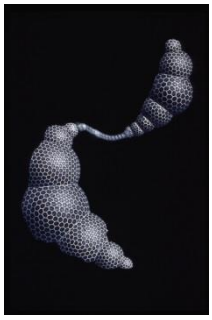


Fig.46. N. Grimshaw

Fig.47. Z. Hadid, for La Costa Jely

Fig.48. Z.Hadid for Swarovski

Their participation into a broad range of non-architectural activities and thus their growing accessibility is not occasional. The expanding of the perimeter of possibilities for attracting and cultivating of the social interest relates in direct ratio to the number and substantiality of the resulting architectural design commissions. They are opened to the public.

Notwithstanding their principle integrity the stars of contemporary architecture present a turbulent kaleidoscope of creative concepts – ranging from the silence and solitude of Zumthor (Fig.49) the deep individual philosophy of Eisenman(Fig.50), the playful forms of Gehry (Fig.51) the magic energy of Hadid (Fig.52), to the violation of rules and pleasure from the conditional of Koolhaas (Fig.53).

Fig.49.P.Zumthor, the termes, Vals, 2009

Fig. 50. P.Eisenman, memorial of the murdered jews, Berlin, 2004

Fig.51. Fr.Gehry, Marques de Riscal, Spain, 2012

Fig.52. Z.Hadid, Serpentine Sacler, 2013

Fig.53. R. Koolhaas, CCTV HQ, Beijing, 2012

The fact that the term “star architect” became conventional is a novelty by itself. According to NEXIS, within a period between 2002-2007,439 articles mention the notion in their contents. Of course, originally no one calls let’s say, Mic Jagger a “star musician” or Johnny Depp a “star actor” – they are unconditional stars without additional clarifications. Until quite soon, architects did not care about special preparations of their appearances before being photographed – haircuts or else. They do not seem to avail of the popularity the show business stars, but it principle they resemble them – their woks can not be replicated industrially and always require major investments to be realized.

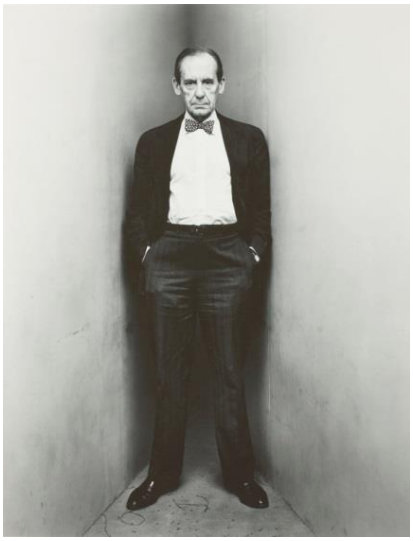


Fig.54. W. Gropius, 1948, USA, I. Penn photo  Ph. Johnson with Mies van der.Rohe, 1956

Decades ago, the visionary architects of Modernism – Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, designed and travelled across the world, representing the active forces, which developed the lately defined International Style,

disseminating relevant for their time ideals. They were the pioneers of star-architecture in the XX century, which started to emerge in the ‘50s.

Fig. 55. A. Breker sculpturing A. Speer, 1940

The notorious Albert Speer, the favorite architect of Adolf Hitler or the omnipotent Philip Cortelyou Johnson also may serve as additional illustrations of the diverse nuances of the public dominance and schemes of purposeful manipulation of architectural images (Fig.54,55). They were the famous architects of the time.

But it was not until the 90-s of the last century that the world renowned architects started to attain the genuine cultic status of heroes and stars. The phenomenon started with the timid primary indications from some symbolic figures as Peter Eisenman or Frank Gehry, stating their willingness to convince the audience to appreciate their work and the potential clients to invest in them. “But it was only with the silvery creature that Frank O. Gehry came up with for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao that architecture became a popular sport and architect a kind of savior” (Rauterberg, 2008:9) writes Hanno Rauterberg, a felicitous allegory of the stars upsurge of the latest architectural elite. For example, aged 50, with comparatively modest practice, Frank Gehry has been crowned almost overnight a *star of architecture* for his building in the Bilbao and with its emblematic success the very term became conventional. In fact, according to Philip Nobel from *The New York Times*, the Chicago architect, working for S.O.M. Harry Wees, was named “star architect” a decade earlier, back in 1987. But the real process of explicit invasion of architects in the focus of public attention of the proportions we acknowledge today, unleashed after the 2000. Frank Gehry himself deems Philip Johnson to be the first real star of architecture. Johnson actually started the **system of provoking mass media attention over the construction of iconic buildings**, with his famous post-modern design of the skyscraper for AT&T (today Sony Tower) in New York, back in 1978. The comments of Charles Jenks are:” Philip woke up the world – the AT&T was front page of The New York Times*”* (Jencks, 2008:11), (Fig.56).

Fig. 56.Johnson, AT&T(Sony Building), N.Y.,compl.1984 and *Time* magazine cover, 1979

It could be presumed that the origin and the contents of the notion “star architect” are deeply rooted in media, which is always ready to record reflected light, as well as the rest of the substrates of pop-culture are, and as such could be deemed inherent exceptionally to contemporaneity. The contemporary heroes of architecture could have emerged only in this particular cultural situation, which allowed the conditions for them to emerge. Notable names of architects and builders have been known for centuries, preserved by the history of ancient art, but as far as the **quality and circulation of information is concerned**, the most prominent “parade” of the stars is possible in such a scale only in our times.

The existence of these specific culminations is prescribed **by the logic of their own cultural contents.** The main role in the processes of their establishment, although secondary, falls on media, which distinguished them in its over-exaggerated thirst for sensations and exciting offers. Thus media achieve additional self-advertising, letting them to be endlessly replicated and sold, as a source of popularity and profit. This is the celebrity industry, in which auspicious architects win place on front pages and significant fees, sometimes for what Peter Zumthor critically calls “beautiful images”. Influential media figures such as Herbert Muschamp for example, the long-term most influential critic of *The New York Times*, took an active part in the campaign, **establishing the architectural fame culture**, which was equally useful, supporting in reflection the critics own status of celebrities. Distinguished iconic names have been systematically offered to the public, in a readable and popular format and the principle of implanting the idea of such phenomena into the social conscience does not differ dramatically from the way the pop-stars image is being ritualized. The press loves eccentricity as a rule.

The communication with contemporary architecture is being more than ever processed via the intercession of mass-media – never before the start of the XXI$^{st}$

century have ever been published such a vast quantity of materials, presenting and praising architects and their work (Fig.57).

Fig.57. Z. Hadid for *Vogue*, 2009 and Rem Koolhaas

The works of the world-renowned architects of the last years enjoy a vogue – the audience is being prepared and informed with preliminary details about their designs, competitions, commissions, so that when the buildings get eventually constructed in reality, they look quite familiar and natural, like something that has always been there. As the art scientist Cristoph Blasé says:"The world is full of information. Before the things actually happen, one has already learned everything about them" (Блейс, 2001:13). Data about most of the famous architectural practices' designs is usually so actively distributed by the global information network that the regular consumer often gets confused does the building exists in reality or is only a render, virtual simulation (Fig.58).

Fig.58. BIG Smithsonian master plan, Washington,2014

This process multiplies and self-organizes additionally, with the language of the constantly striving for perfection media and providing its founders and its agents with expanding resources, presents and sells them better and better, realizing expanding

profits. The media itself, by the specific services they provide, reconfirm their own significance – their main intention is to present best-quality products with high degree of public interest. Undoubtedly, a communicative approach of architectural supply reaching such an extensive users' audience is possible to take place only under the **conditions, which the unlimited global digital media of today can provide.** With its unlimited technological resources. This way, "architecture has managed to leave its mark on a wider culture in a way that it has never done it before: buildings get noticed" (Sudjic, 2006:297). And there is hardly any way or any reason to deny the fact that this new type of broadly promulgated by mass-media imagery, imperceptibly enriches the means of dissemination of ideas and provokes new processes of development of architectural culture.

## 2. Representation.

### 2.1. General Characteristic

The factual star architects form a limited group of about 30 internationally renowned names, prevalently men, with several exceptions, and mostly of Western-European origin. Almost all of them are Prizker winners, the architectural equivalent of Noble prize. Some still are not – like Greg Lynn or Peter Eisenman, probably due to their focus situated predominantly in the sphere of the conceptual. Of course, this circumstance doesn't prevent them from being cultic figures in the world of architectural prominence. As real contemporary businessmen they spend a major part of their life, flying across the world and these people which they meet and speak to either avail of substantial amounts of money or of patience, or both. It took Hano Rauterberg not less than a year to manage to arrange interview appointments with some of them for the pages of the German *Die Zeit* (Rauterberg, 2008). Notwithstanding his being an influential architectural critic. In the international architecture competitions the participation of a member of the "stars group" is deemed a sign of prestige and in most of the cases might predetermine the vote of the jury. Herbert Muschamp's comment about the winning design of the "Ground 0"competition is: "It is not a plan, it is an ARCHITECT that is being chosen". And in an interview with Norman Foster in 2001 Charles Jenks says: "You are highly competitive, Norman. If I see you in a competition, I know you're in there to win"(Chance, 2001:33).

The name of a woman in the list of most popular architects is a real precedent, an exception – architecture is generally presumed to be a male profession. Maybe this is explicable as a resistant derivative of the late Modernism psychology, which did not allow women to its level, the same way it did not accept dialog with the clients or didn't need permission to act according its own rules. In the best case even today women-architects are members of teams – like Ellen van Loon, or wives and collaborators of stars, like Doriana Fuksas and Elizabeth Diller (although Elizabeth

Diller is quite famous these days). When Rauterberg asks Zaha Hadid – the first woman Prizker-winner, why is she, more or less, the only one among the world's famous man-architects, Hadid's answer was: " ..obviously most clients don't quite dare to get mixed up with a woman. It takes an Iraqi woman to show them how*"* (Chance, Schmiedeknecht, 2001:81). Zaha Hadid, now a regular British citizen, is said not to enjoy special appreciation in the country, according to her own words. She was mostly considered eccentric and people wanted to write her off as "a *paper architect*", whose buildings were impossible to construct. *Times* even called her once "the best hated architect in England". But fame is always provocative, even with a negative sign – let us remember the lines of the top movie-star Kirk Douglas, who self-ironically says: "My great merit is that the audience loves to hate me" (Сегела, 1999:156). Rejection, negative emotions create permanent samples in social conscience and by association keep everything concerning themin the focus of the public attention. Accepted or denied, Zaha Hadid is a star-architect. Aaron Betsky, the respected critic and Director of Cincinnati Art Museum called her "a monumental creator of global culture"(Fig.59). The name of Farshid Moussavi born in Iran British architect, is also well known, as a member of one of the markedly creative innovative practices internationally (Fig.60). Winka Dubbleldam (Fig.61), a young "elegant, hyper-intelligent" sophisticated Dutch architect from the New York *Archi Tectonics* is another example of contemporary avant garde architect. Recently, Kazuyo Sejima a former employee of Toyo Ito's practice, today representing her own collaborative practice SANAA, from an exceptionally working in Japan architect, is gaining growing popularity in Europe and USA (Fig.62). Together with her partner Ryue Nishizawa, she is the Prizker prize winner for 2010 and has been commissioned director of the International Venice Biennale the same year. And of course, the legendary Denise Scott Brown – under the inevitable shadow of Robert Ventury, who is the Prizker winner in their many-years-tandem (Fig.63). And she is not. "The star system is definitely male dominated and excludes the female. The field encourages hero-worshipping and the heroes are male" write Arentzen and Groat in *Rethinking Architectural Education* (Stevens, 1998:11), which by the way, they accuse of straight sexism.

Fig. 59. Zaha Hadid

Fig.60.Farshid Moussavi

Fig.61.Winka Dubbledamm

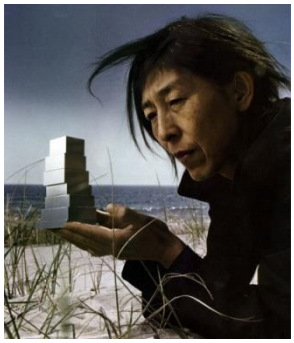


Fig.62. Kazuyo Sejima

Fig.63. Denise Scott Brown

### 2.2. Personal and Professional Self-perception in Architecture

As a rule, being interviewed, contemporary star architects express their hope that more and more people will be captivated by the influence of the iconic buildings and will start to appreciate the beneficiations of the 3D-experience created by the architects, with its appealing atmosphere and grace.

A universal quality, which all the star of architecture share, is perhaps the specific, that they could be qualified as **everything but conformists**. Or to expect them to share some form of self-confidence deficiency. It was not extraneous of the Early Modernism pioneers too, which remained in history with the enviable heroism, with which they stood up for their concepts or their inviolability. The stararchitects today bravely proclaim their rights to demonstrate extraordinary individual creative principles. The collaboration between Rem Koolhaas and Zaha Hadidi did not last a long time after her graduation from the School of Architecture of the Architectural Association in London. Shortly after that, Koolhaas qualified her as "*a planet with its own orbit*". Cooperation between the most prominent is not habitual, although exceptions of titanic teams of stars, formed for concrete assignments impress during the last decade (Fig.64).

Fig.64.Gehry, Nouvel, Koolhaas, in a project in Dusseldorf, 1998, ph. Th. Mayer

Non-conformity and self-loyalty is a typical characteristic of the stars and of course not of necessarily the architectural ones only (Сегела, 1999). These characteristics often uncork the way to immortal fame combined with the definite denial to obey rules. The accuracy of the stars of high self-perception is remarkable, as well as the rigidity with which they stick with the type of personalities – as creed and behavior, which they identify themselves with. The numerous interviews and publications unambiguously illustrate this fact. Surrounded by recognition and permanent interest towards their work and their persons, it is quite natural for them to accept the star status, and as Dejan Sudjic says:" they started to believe in all this". The continuous public expectations for more and more astounding iconic buildings, with which the favorite architects justify their image and surprise with inexhaustible originality, condemn them to the classical *star-perpetum mobile* of the necessity to constant defense of their status quo of superiority. By definition, the super persons flawlessly have to prove their self-sufficiency in all of their, even non-professional, activities – as work, fame, possessions, luxury, travels, elegance, family relations. They are being observed publicly and constantly. This is a kind of perfection, born in the total saturation of the borders of private and public events, overexposed with taste and extravagance. Because it is easier to BECOME a star, it is much more difficult to BE, TO REMAIN a star. As Edgar Morin writes: *"….*the star must nourish its own myth" (Morin, 1964:67). This is the myth, which defines their private/public life, implied on their architectural works, the same works, which in fact originate and define their stardom. This dialectic is universal; it stipulates the rules in the star-architecture society and also of the primary Holywood star system valid for the rest of the entertainment industries.

In various publications of the famous among architects and in their self-estimations in general, architecture is never discerned as a high form of egomania. They not only demonstrate great degree of self-respect, they are embroiled into the process of supporting their impeccable professional aura, transposed upon their personal features by the public attitude. The audience requires from its stars to stand for the perfect models, which these very stars have already prompted and induced. A proof could be spotted in the moral discussion that took place some years ago and the reproaches of the press against Rem Koolhaas's commissions in countries with repressive political regimes, like China. Or against Zaha Hadid, which was even accused of hypocrisy – she was reading lectures, praising democracy and was simultaneously designing for dictators' governments. These are christomatic examples of the rules, which structure the system of Western elite apprehension. The massive American and European investment in the Far East do not seem to be criticized, at least not so severely. Or the design activities of S.O.M., which had more than 30 major projects in 2003, in China only. But **the public attitude is explicitly pretentious to the star architects, to the persons** – the press attacks on the professional moral choices generalize the requirements of the common public appreciation system, sensitive to the personal manifestations of its idols (Fig.65).

Some recent research data shows, that 94% of the distinguished, active in the profession today, have adopted architecture as a life-time occupation (Stevens, 1998). The peremptory choice and self- appreciation, which in other professions might concern solely subsistence mechanisms, in this case is modeled by a large-scale publicity and acknowledgement of architectural production, defining personal messages, which the top architects are already obliged by their image to maintain within the society. The expectations of the mass, provoked and modeled by the stars themselves, naturally associate the perfect buildings with their perfect creators, the sophistication of the artifact with the perfection of its master.

Fig.65. Popular cartoons- Herzog/de Meuron, P.Eisenman, E.O. Moss

### 2.3. "The Star Architects" - Presentation

They expressed the spirit of our time, creating iconic images via buildings, according to the canon of a new media religion, established by contemporary culture and this was the key to their success. They proved relevant to the mediatic essence of our times. Various classifications of stararchitects exist, which include the same list of names as a rule with negligible fluctuations or exclude some of the names as "former" stars, probably due to the lack of serious recent realizations or decline of the public interest towards their work. Usually at the final stage of every authoritative architectural competition "*the great 10"* are listed, or "*the usual suspects*", as Charles Jencks qualifies them. They are part of the elite of the average 100 architects, which compete at the highest level in the globalized world and design almost every engaging common interest building in the world. By interpolation, Jencks calculates the number of the famous names in architecture, during the 20$^{th}$ century, to be no more than 450 (Jencks, 2005). .

This is in fact a kind of a restrictive field of the architectural elite, as opposed to the “mass” field and this restrictive field is accepted as a dictator of the legitimate actual architectural taste, which the representatives of the second group, the minor field, have to share and follow, even if they do not always understand its essence. This type of hierarchy is typical for the intellectual professions today – it compares the paramount levels, highly paid, and the socially less secured low-paid positions.

“There can never have been a moment when so much high-visibility architecture has been designed by so few people. Sometimes it seems as if there are just thirty architects in the world, the flying circus of the perpetually jet-lagged consisting of the twenty who take each other seriously enough to acknowledge the presence of another member of the magic circle when they meet at first class lounge at Heathrow and another ten running of empty, who have been rumbled by their peers but who for the time being can still pull in the clients on the strength of past glories” (Sudjic, 2005:296).

As an example in his book *Talking Architecture*, dedicated to the contemporary stars of architecture, Hano Rauterberg includes interviews with 17 from the architectural elite. These are as folows:

**Norman R. Foster, Gunter Behnisch, Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Meinhard von Gerkan & Volkwin Marg, Zaha Hadid, Jacques Herzog & Pierre de Meuron, Philip Johnson, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, Greg Lynn, Oskar Niemeyer, Frey Otto, I.M. Pey, Robert Ventury & Denise Scott Brown, Peter Zumthor. Also the engineer Cecil Balmond, legendary name of the “Arup” Group and collaborator of a number of star architects.**

To the list some other names could be added – as **David Chipperfield, Jean Nouvel, Bernardt Tschumi, Renzo Piano, Santiago Calatrava, Thom Mayne from “Morphosis”, Wolf Prix from Coop Himmelblau, Scofidio & Diller**..(Fig.66)

Fig.66. The Stars…

## 3. Factors of Fame

Why are they stars in the first place? Who and how is to become famous in architecture? How did it happen that the star architects became a part of the celebrity industry? In the course of identification of the answers of these questions, certain commonalities are discernible, which could be extracted as inherent characteristics of a mechanism of architectural prominence.

### a) Talent

The architects of world fame are exceptional, unique, notable persons and professionals – it is nonsensical and inept to depreciate their achievements or in some cases, even stigmatize them for their social position. At least the rejections, the criticism if any, should be objectively clarified. The glorious correlation of architectural genius necessarily with natural artistic gift raises the logical discourse on the facts on the creative potential of the best architects. What is talent after all – the definition will provoke a myriad of considerations and an analysis of the mater is not specifically the aim of this text. “Talent is a matter of love” Romy Schneider said once. No doubt that all these prosperous names in contemporary architecture are backed up by the special creativity abilities which the profession requires and are excessively dedicated to it, which logically discerns and exemplifies them from the rest of their kin.

Talent as a granted precedence turns out to be anyway the necessary but insufficient condition for successful career and star status. Even the most superficial review shows that great architects owe their prosperity as much to personal potential and talent, as to social origin and to a number of additional factors, having almost nothing to do with natural artistic brilliance. The debate on the essence and dimensions of architectural genius is invariably open. It affects some of the canonized architectural epitomes in history, which are not achievements of undoubtedly ingenious architects – it is not a secret, that Walter Gropius, the emblematic name of a whole century of architectural history, was known for his inability to draw (Хаберлик, 2008:61). Not much of artistic gift in this case could be concluded.

Nevertheless, architectural design requires natural potential, such as imagination abilities, colors and space sensitivity, understanding of form and composition. As well as “*otherness*” of perceptions – to notice something that has not been appreciated by the others. Because “everything always starts with some innovation, something new, deviating, marginal, modest message, often invisible to its contemporaries” (Morin, 2010). Advanced unconventional design is a priority in the star architects’ portfolio. An example – In his 1989 competition proposition for a monumental solution of the West Coast Gate in Los Angelis, Hany Rashid reveals an

absolutely revolutionary concept of the "*living monument*" with his famous although inbuilt work (Fig.67).

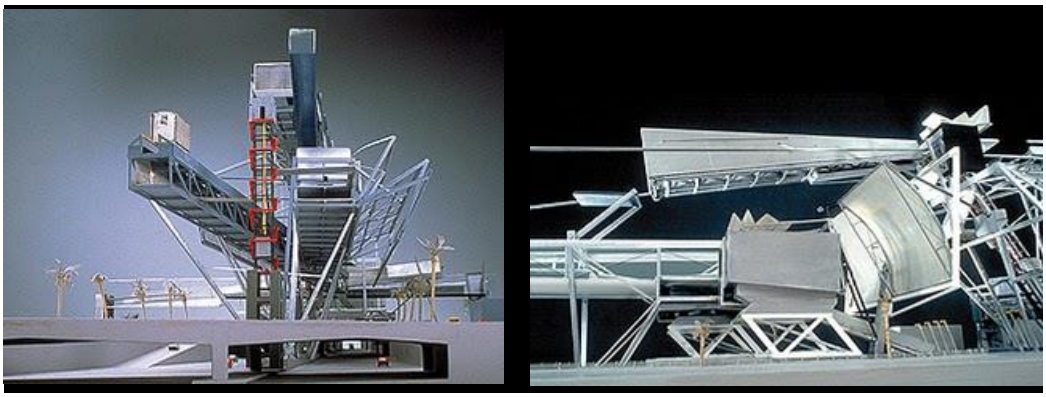


Fig.67.H. Rashid, Steel Cloud, L.A., 1989

Instead of the ordinary vertical mark of the traditional monument, his solution offers a genuine habitable environment, structured by galleries, cinema, theaters, parks, penetrated by the permeating city spaces. Although visual references to the stylistic of Russian technicizm and constructivism from the 20-es of the last century are easily distinguished, the treatment of the monumental and the attitude to signification philosophy were really innovative for its time.

Talented persons in art are generators of new ideas as a rule. When Frank Gehry created the design of his Bilbao Guggenheim museum, he not only presented a building never seen before. He reconsidered the nature of the concept of contemporary museums, within the context of the modernist evolution of aesthetics as an art philosophy, after the shocking Marcel Breuer of 1917, who distorted the sanctum of the traditional museum, exposing as museum objects and pieces of art hair dryer, bicycle weal and a window frame. And a urinal, called the *Fountain* (Fig.68,69).

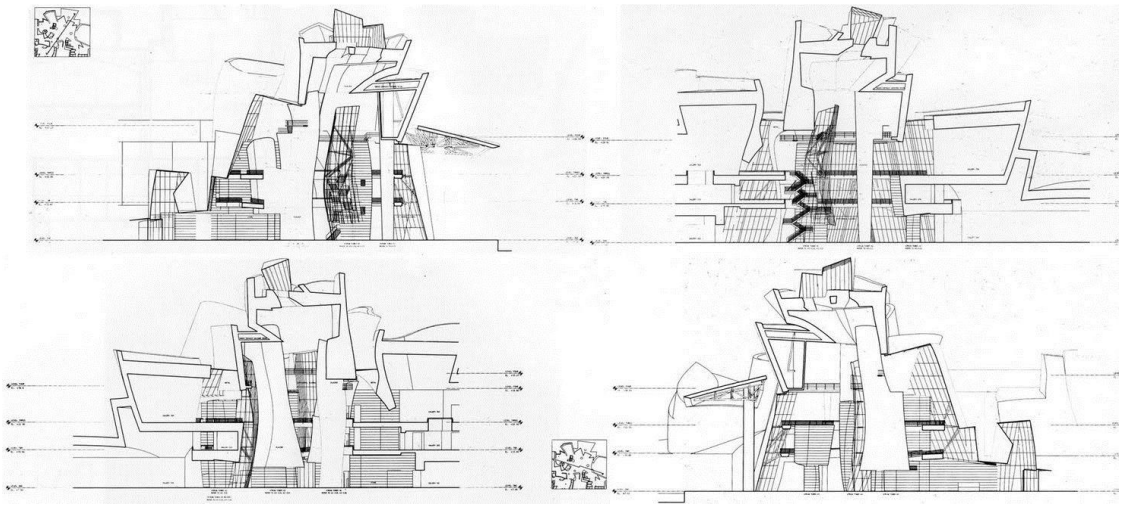


Fig.68. Fr. Gehry, Solomon Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, Spain sections

Fig. 69.M. Breuer, *The Fountain*, 1917

A series of circumstances, which established the Guggenheim museum in Spain as an emblematic piece of art of the star architects' era brilliantly coincided, but the decisive provocation, which guaranteed success of the building as publicly attractive, remains the hazardous architectural design.

**Ambition and remarkable capacity to work**, although not exactly identical with the idea of talent, are also inalienable to the creative profile of the contenders for star career. "Exclusive things come as a reward of the thirst to always be first*"* (Сегела, 1999:10). Norman Foster reveals that the difficulties of the years of his poor youth are the reason for his extraordinary ambition to succeed – *"*I developed at the time a strong desire to show everyone some day" (Rauterberg, 2008:47).

Fig.70. Fred Aster and Ginger Rogers

The movie star Fred Aster has been practicing dancing during the whole period of his career for no less than 6 hours a day, in order to hold his position of being the "Star" Fred Aster (Fig.70).

71. Fr. Gehry, "Maggie's Center", Scotland, 2003

Fig.72. Fr. Gehry, Opus building, Hong Kong, 2012

The stars of contemporary architecture are also "*workaholics*" as a rule, extremely busy and actively practicing people. An example – for the "Maggie's Center" project with its modest 200sq.m. built area, Frank Gehry has developed more than 70 models to examine and achieve the final vision, satisfying his design concept (Fig.71).

Also for his first residential project in Hong Kong, comprising 12 extremely expensive flats, more than 200 variation drafts of the design preceded the final version (Fig.72).

**b) Origin**

Talent needs favorable conditions to be cultivated in any sphere. According to the extensive Macmillan's Encyclopedia of Architecture (MEA), availing of 2600 biographies and data about famous architects of the world, the most eminent architects come from 52 nations, 35 of which give no more than 1% of the overall number of the established names. As shown in Table1 (according to Garry Stevens "The Favored Circle") 5 countries are dominant – England, Italy, France, USA, Germany.

| COUNTRY | NUMBER | % | COUNTRY | NUMBER | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| England | 436 | 16 | Russia | 39 | 1 |
| Italy | 420 | 16 | CzechRepublic | 38 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| USA | 406 | 15 | Canada | 38 | 1 |
| France | 334 | 13 | Sweden | 37 | 1 |
| Germany | 224 | 8 | Denmark | 36 | 1 |
| Holland | 105 | 4 | Ireland | 33 | 1 |
| Spain | 85 | 3 | Greece | 29 | 1 |
| Scotland | 79 | 3 | Japan | 26 | 1 |
| Austria | 51 | 2 | Other | 237 | 9 |

**Table 1**

This situation is not surprising. Global distribution of wealth has never been even, about 9% of the population (in USA, Japan and Germany) avails of 50% of overall acquisitions (Worldwatch 2007). In 2014, 85 persons possess as much assets as half of the global population does. As a reflection, according to "City" and "Knight Frank" ratings in 2009 and 2010, two cities of the world exchange first positions, out of 40 mega-polices, to be qualified "the most influential city of the world"– London and New York. The evaluation includes criteria as economic activity, quality of life, political influence and intellectual capital. The concentration in certain economic centers and the domination of the Western culture model are still valid, despite the recent symbolic invocation of Rem Koolhaas: "Go East" and the Far East gaining gradually economic power.

Donald MacKinnon, a psychology researcher in the sphere of stardom in architecture states that all of the observed prominent architects come from **artistic families.** Rem Koolhaas – with a father critic and script-writer; Frank Gehry – born in Canada in the family of Polish Jews, encouraged and directed in art since childhood by his parents; the roots of I.M.Pey bankers' family could be traced back to the Chinese Ming Dynasty; Zaha Hadid also comes from a diplomatic family, with her father an influential politician, who held the position of minister of finances and industry of Iraq. As Garry Stevens writes: "Those born to the game just seem to end up in the right job with the right firm doing the right sort of work*"* (Stevens, 1998:100). The access to a client or decision maker, who can provide a prestigious first-class assignment to the architect, is facilitated considerably by the social background of his family connections, established in time (Williamson, 1999).

Contemporary stars of architecture come as a rule from financially stable families, or at least middle-class as a rule. The design of the family house often serves as a start for their successful career (Fig.73).

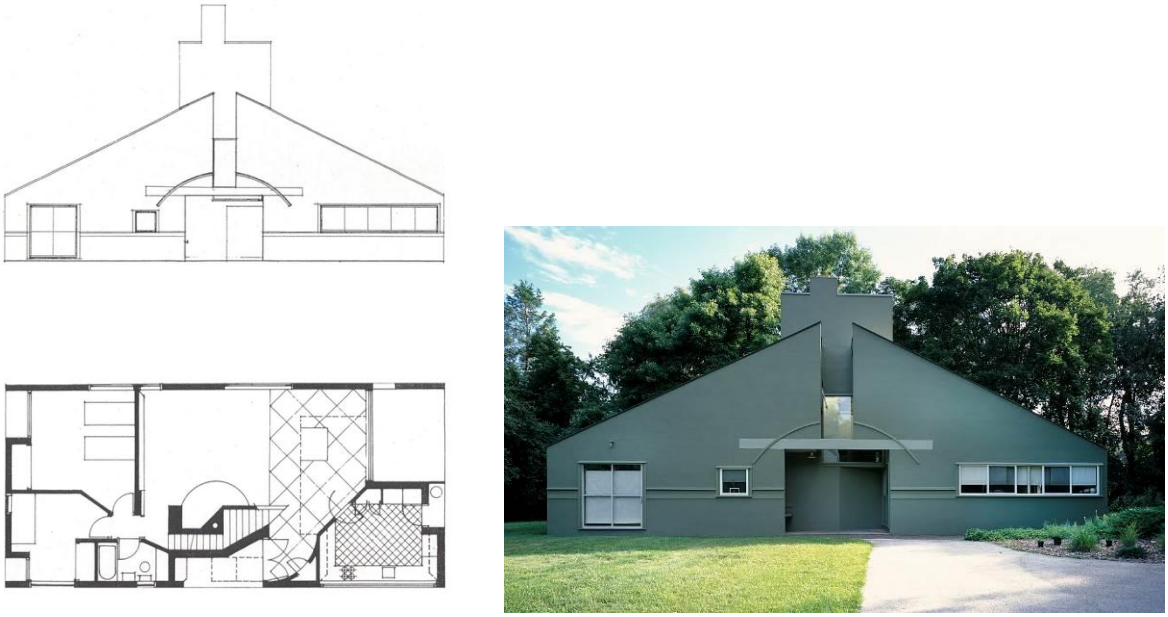


Fig.73. R. Ventury, Vanna Ventury house, Philadelphia, 1964

Or – “An attempt at symbolic revolution is, therefore, best made with the knowledge that a secure redoubt lies behind one, and so, the members of the field most likely to promote heresy are those **with secure economic and symbolic bases** (Stevens, 1998:100). Back in 1932 Philip Johnson dared to launch the *International Stile* exhibition in New York MoMA but his substantial familial wealth served as quite ample guarantee in case of probable fail of this revolution event. Family fortune usually guarantees position in the patrimony of an established elite order, in which although in the role of revolutionaries, the heroes attacking the rules, could always rely upon eventual indulgence. All faults could be easily compensated.

To some degree the emblematic sir Norman Foster seems to be an exception, in contradiction to the already stated because of his modest workers’ family origin from the poor quarters of Manchester (Fig.74).

Fig.74. N. Foster, Carre d’Art, Nimmes, 2013, Moving: Norman Foster on Art

But in the concrete case this circumstance from an offset turns into an advantage. Creative zeal and ambition could be even much more motivating when aristocratism is not granted by birth. “When necessary, Norman Foster fights as professional boxer, in a gentlemen profession” (Хаберлик' 2008:188) is a suitable metaphor, a typical example for architectural natural selection – survive only the most adaptable to the environment. Supplementary to this law of nature, the general cultural milieu amidst a certain society could be much more favorable than other, and this is an asset that should be taken into consideration as a prerequisite for personal development. The chances of obtaining qualified high rate education are incomparable and the initial ambition for achievements in this case serves as an enhancement.

### c) Education and training

Most of the architectural superstars avail of suitable biographies, socially and financially. If they don’t, the usual compensation is a high-class education. Graduation from a prestigious high school is a decisive prerequisite – all of the renowned contemporary architects which define and structure the sense of architecture today have studied in authoritative English or American universities, often gaining special qualifications in more than one reputable educational institution. E.g. – Rem Koollhaas – Architectural Association in London and Cornell University, Peter Zumthor – Pratt University in New York, Greg Lynn – Princeton University, Zaha Hadid – AA also, Richard Rogers – Yale University School of Architecture.

The great architects of the world have been often interrelated as teachers and disciples. Training practice in a prominent architectural office of high reputation has served in many successful architectural careers as a basic steppingstone. The examples are ubiquitous. Greg Lynn worked for Peter Eisenman. James Sterling has been much influenced by his teacher, the theorist and urbanist Colin Rowe. Also Colin Rowe and Mamfredo Tafuri have been mentors of Peter Eisenman. Jean Nouvel has worked as project manager for the famous cultural theorist Paul Virilio. David Chipperfield has consecutively worked for Richard Rogers and Norman Foster, after his graduation in the School of Architecture of the Architectural Association in London. Zaha Hadid who has also studied there, started her professional career in OMA with Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis. Daniel Libeskind worked with Richard Meier in 1968 and with Peter Eisenman in 1972. Robert Ventury, who has graduated Princeton University *summa cum laude* (with excellency) has worked shortly with Eero Saarinen and Louis Kahn. Renzo Piano has also worked with Louis Kahn in Philadelphia. Jan Kaplicky established FUTURE SYSTEMS (they designed Selfridges in Birmingham) further to his employment by Foster Associates in 1979 and ten years later Amanda Levete joined him, coming from Richard Rogers and Partners. Cesar Pelli started his career from Eeero Saarinen’s burro and Moshe Safdie – from Louis Kahn’s. The recently well-known

exceptionally successful British architect David Adjaye is obviously not a typical example of genuine European aristocracy – with his Tanzanian origin, bur he has graduated in Royal College of Art in London and has been initially appointed in David Chipperfield's architectural practice. In 2009 Adjaye was commissioned to design the 500 thousand dollars Museum of Afro-American history in Washington and it was the symbolic claim for membership in the "*magic circle*" of the contemporary world-renowned architects. And also is engaged with the organization of the Biennale in Chicago next year 2015, highly prestigious event (Fig.75).

Fig.75. D. Adjaye and FAB, Smithsonian museum of African American, Washington, 2009-2015

Winka Dubledamm, which from an almost theoretical experimentator of computer sculpture design gradually accredited her name in the club of the famous, has herself practiced in a real constellation of prominent architectural companies such as OMA with Rem Koolhaas, Steven Hall, Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman.

Norman Foster, probably the most popular of all stars of architecture, has been in a long term collaboration with the legendary Buckminster Fuller, starting in 1968 until Fuller's death in 1983 (Fig.76).

Fig.76. From Witney museum exhibition, Norman Foster, Marta Herford, Frank, Kaltenbach, Buckminster Fuller

All these particulars are not occasional, they rather form certain sociological regularity. Distinctive networks of architectural influence are easily identified through the course of the overall history of architecture. This is not surprising as far as architectural profession presumes mastering of specific workmanship practices and relations. Even if we look not so further back in time – the Modernists' architectural avant garde comprises persons professionally bound, often as pupils of authoritative names of the preceding period. Peter Behrens is called "*father of architecture of Modernism*" and with a reason. To work with him have had the chance consecutively architects, whose names have been later canonized as symbols of Modernism – Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe. "Gropius has stepped on the broad shoulders of Behrens" ( Хаберлик, 2008:40) is an emblematic allegory of this fact.

Philip Johnson is also a figure which could serve as a genuine logo of the architectural interconnections, with his active contacts with almost every popular name of the panorama of modern architecture.

The most innovative architects have been working with other innovative predecessors, bound in especially restrictive "pedigrees" of influence and opportunities, able to establish specific aesthetic dictate (Williamson, 1991:41).

But "..ambition to become ..a great architect requires much more than obtaining formal education or knowledge, it requires the slow acquisition of all the models and manners of the upper class…to enter the field and aspire to its uppermost reaches is not a mere few years in university, it is one's whole life" ( Bourdieu, in The Favored Circle:111).

Fig.77. "The dons of the New York's architectural Mafia – plus a few in laws", (cit.D. Dunster in Fame and Architetcure:8)

The emblematic photograph on Fig. 77 has been taken at the *Four Seasons* restaurant in Seagram building by *Vanity Fair* photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders on Philip Johnson's 90$^{th}$ birthday. Five years later on his 95$^{th}$ birthday the photographer has been invited again to take pictures of the event at the same place and almost the same participants. This special attention to the approximately 100-years-old Johnson looks like "a tribute not so much to the significance of Johnson's

contribution to the history of architecture but as a reminder of his importance to the cult of fame" (Sudjic, 2005:88). All of the presented are architects of grand class, coming from the four ends of the world. This seems to be an act not only of mere respect to the esteemed colleague but much more a kind of acceptance of a "*benediction*", which has been a contribution to the careers of all of them. Being the person behind MoMA in New York for more than 75 year, Philip Johnson established himself as a kind of a person-institution, skillfully manipulating the very base of the architectural fame in USA and internationally. Coming from a very rich family of lawyers he has been committed by the Rockefeller family, whose representatives have been for a long time sitting on the board of trustees, to design Grace Rainey Rogers Annex 1951 and The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden 1953 of MoMA.

**d) Titles**

Aristocratism is innate to architecture – as nature, history and stereotype. If the observation goes back to the "aristocrats of spirit", the sacred names of the Renaissance architecture – they used to carefully court their noble patrons-protectors and imitate their manners in order to be publicly identified as equal to them. In Europe still the most popular social imitation models are those of the aristocracy. By the emblematic conferring the title *"lord*" to Norman Foster in 1990, the titles of honor awarding system welcomed the contemporary avant garde of architecture in its high class circles. (Norman Foster is Baron of Thames Bank, a life peer since 1999 and a member of the House of Lords, although he had to step down from his seat in 2010) The "British Knights" Nickolas Grimshaw, Richard Rogers (Fig.78), the deceased James Sterling, Michael Hoppkins entered the Queen's Honours List and became as the press called them " *the knights of hi-tech*". Similar to the numerous eminent representatives of other art spheres, their hereditary ranks positioned them directly on the very peak of the specific constitution of British society. The gaining of this comparatively new type of eminence sets requirements of its own to be demonstrated and properly exploited as additional tangible means of prominence (Fig.78).

Fig.78. R. Rogers, Buckingham palace 17.11.1991 and at Rogers & Harbour with the Queen of England

The ordination of titles of honor is a kind of an archetype ritual, supporting the century-old aura of aristocracy and power. And architecture has always been about authority and excellence (Fig, 79, 80).

Fig.79.N.Foster, Award Ceremony "Prince of Asturias" Spain, 2008

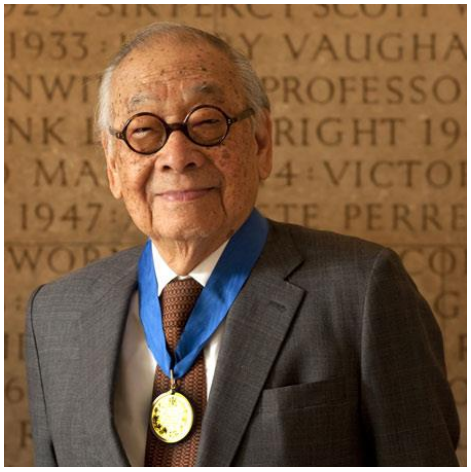


Fig.80.I.M.Pei awarded the Royal Golden Medal, RIBA, 23.10.2009

The movie stars, the original of the notion, also "have always strived for decoration with some noble title"(Сегела, 1999:156) – **the women,** by marriage like Gloria Swanson (Fig.81) who married Henry, Marquis de la Falaise or Grace Kelly – the legendary Princess concord of Monaco; **the men** – knighted by the Queen like Sir Laurence Olivier. The explanation of this appetite for ranks is the ambition for establishment and accumulation of lasting success. But as Jacques Seguela says, sometimes it is important for the star to cleave to personal achievements. Coco Chanel refused marriage proposal of the fabulously rich Duke of Westminster because according to her words, "history may know several Duchesses of Westminster but Coco Chanel is one and only" (Сегела, 1999:157)", (Fig.82). And preferred to remain unique.

Fig.81. Gloria Swanson, 1920

Fig.82. Coco Chanel

The titles of professional organizations, e.g., the ones of the architects from countries of the former British Empire and some European monarchies are a significant example. With the Queen's permission the name of the guild institution incorporates the adjective "Royal". This appendix has long ago lost its special function except for the implication of certain institutional solidity and affiliation to the traditions of aristocracy. It is not difficult to decipher the ambition of the Institution Architecture to re-confirm its dominant position. It is controversial if the architects-members of these organizations attach special importance to the details of its name anyway. But it is much more probable that their clients do, as the culture models of European aristocracy are still the constant invalidating paradigm, notwithstanding the postmodern revisions of the habitual manifestations of the traditions. This is a typical symbolic **decorema – a sign of social status,** an utterance with immediate influence deeply encoded within the historical consciousness of the societies (Fig.83).

RIBA

Fig.83. Royal Institute of British Architects, since 1834

**e) Chance, Politicians, Corporations**

Protection from politicians, corporations or critics is an important prerequisite of the process of establishment of successful career in architecture, the start of which is often a matter of concurrence of circumstances and pure luck. Significant commissions attained by the favor of men of power have been the priceless chance for the career of many stars of architecture today. And this is not something new in the history of architecture – architecture is an expensive art, which is impossible to come to reality without its influential supporters and clients (Figf.84, 85).

Fig.84.Nigel Coats and Prince Charles, 2010(Guardian) Fig.85. R.Rogers & A.Harbour with M.Obama, Western London, 03.04.2009

As Steven Hall says – “It is always about the clients. Without good clients, you can’t have good architecture” (Ouroussoff, 03.05.2010, the NY Times). To become a star is pretty much a favor of fortune – to obtain the congenial commission. It is the one and same Hollywood mechanism. “The star appears only at the level of a hero of a major film” (Morin, 1964: 38).

**In architecture the image of the iconic building, symbolically merges with the personality of the architect-designer in a specific osmosis and this principled dialectic of the relation CREATOR/PRODUCTION synthesizes the substance of the “star”.** Talented charismatic persons, cultivating media interest and political connection, courting influential critics, contemporary stars of architecture definitely attain the aura of aesthetic perfections. Enjoying a high social prestige they obtain opportunities for contacts in the high social levels of power. In 2009 Thom Mayne has been invited as an art adviser of president Obama, joining the President’s Committee on Art ant Humanities, together with among others, Sarah Jessica Parker and *Vogue’s* editor Anna Wintour. This type of protection the architect could rely upon is far from banal lobbying – for example Thom Mayne did not win the competition for the American Embassy in London building in London, which his position could have generally presupposed (Fig.86).

Fig.86.K.Timberlake winning entry American Embassy in London and *Morphosys* entry, 2010

But a political affiliation of the kind contains the value of symbolic capital and offers possibilities of personal presence at certain levels, which exceeds substantially the general operative milieu of the ordinary architect. Richard Rogers has been design adviser to the Mayor of London for 8 years and to the Mayor of Barcelona as well. In 2006, when he unadvisedly accepted the jubilee meeting of the Organization of Town Planners and Urbanists of Palestine in his office in London, he was violently confronted by the backlash of pro-Israeli politicians and investors and he was immediately deprived of a number of outstanding prestigious contracts. He subsequently hasted not only to distinguish from any further contacts with the

organization but even publicly qualified the Palestinians as “terrorist”, which were confronting a democratic country. Notwithstanding this precedent, Deyan Sudjic calls Richard Rogers “Britain’s politically best connected architect for half a century”(Sudjic, 2005:159). The trend is distinct – the contemporary eminent architect, from an artist is transforming into a specific kind of technocrat, specialized in compulsory provision of favor from the institutions, related to his professional prosperity. With all due respect to his undeniable qualities of talented architect – Dominique Perrault for example starts his meteoric career being absolutely obscure young architect, receiving a credit to confidence by the President of France Francois Mitterrand for the design of the extension of the French National Library in Paris in 1988. The library was constructed expressly with the support of the President shortly before his death and is considered one of his grand monuments – a modern glassy splendor, that he believed would carry his name (Fig.87).

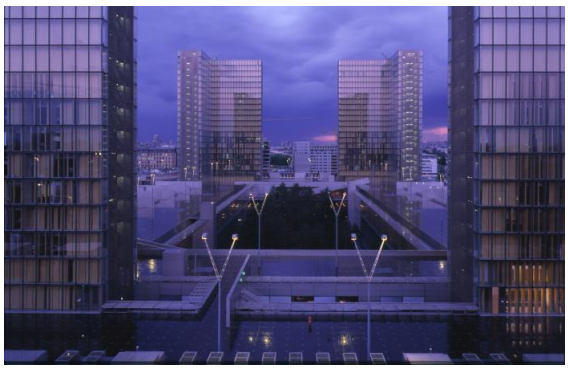


Fig.87. D. Perrault, French National Library, Paris

Fig.88.J. Nouvel, Institute du Monde Arab 1981-1987

Fig.89.Museum Quai Branly, Paris, 2006

Another French architectural star – Bernard Tschumi, also enjoys Presidential support at the dawn of his career. The Institute du Monde Arab designed by Jean Nouvel, constructed between 1981 and 1987 is called “*one of Mitterrand’s greatest projects*”, (Fig.88). About another of his projects, the Quai Branly Museum, (Fig.89) the architect confesses that “Jaques Chirac has backed up the project” (Nouvel,

Sofia *Abitare talks*, 02,02,2010) as a minister in Mitterrand's cabinet. Availing of almost unrestricted powers of "elected monarch", Mitterrand shows exceptional interest in architectural resources for establishment of governmental power and takes the initiative for granting broad even intentional support as an initial start-chance of the professional upsurge of the most outstanding names in contemporary French architecture.

The examples are not accidental but rather a rule. Accepting the recommendation of the authoritative Philip Johnson in his position of founder and director of MoMA Department of Architecture and Design Phyllis Lambert, daughter of the magnate CEO of *Seagram* Samuel Bronfman, chooses Mies van der Rohe for the design of the famous company headquarters in Manhattan. This is the project that to the largest degree presents Mies in USA as an ideologist of the International Style and symbolically predisposes an extremely successful career (Fig.90).

Fig.90. Mies van der Rohe and Phyllis Lambert with the model of Seagram building, New York, 1955

The Seagram Building, NY

Notwithstanding the fact that maybe the architectural visual "uniform" of the buildings of modern capitalism has been mostly created by S.O.M., its vocabulary definitely belongs to van der Rohe. Lambert herself remains a patron of the colossal architect ever after their meeting in the 50-es and even in 2001 curated the exhibition "Mies in America" in MoMA in the Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal. She has been awarded Golden Lion of the Architectural Exhibition of the Biennial in Venice in 2014 for her "huge contribution to architecture, not as an architect, but as a client and custodian"(by Rem Koolhaas and Paolo Barrata at the opening ceremony on 07. 07.2014).

Thomas Krens, another legendary figure in the field of architectural fame, the long-term director of the *Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation* – he has promoted Frank.O.Gehry to become a star by his active support for the realization of the iconic Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. From a designer of residential buildings, jewelry shops and malls for Victor Gruen, dropped out from most of the important

architectural competitions in LA, the Californian architect got his chance, created a world sensation and was crowned by the *Vanity Fair* magazine world architecture research as “the most important architect of our time*”*. In return, the supervening global glory of the star architect Frank Gehry turned Krens vise versa into the mostly discussed museum director in the world (Fig.91).

Fig.91. T. Krens with Fr. Gehry, 82-nd birthday of Gehry, 22.03.2011

During its millenary history architecture has been successfully used by political leaders or men of power to impress, to seduce, to subject. The legendary photograph of Hitler in front of the Tower of Eiffel during his only visit to Paris in 1940 – it has been arranged quite intentionally at the concrete place and with the concrete participants (Fig.92).

Fig.92. Hitler in Paris, June 1940, joined by Speer, Giesler and Breker

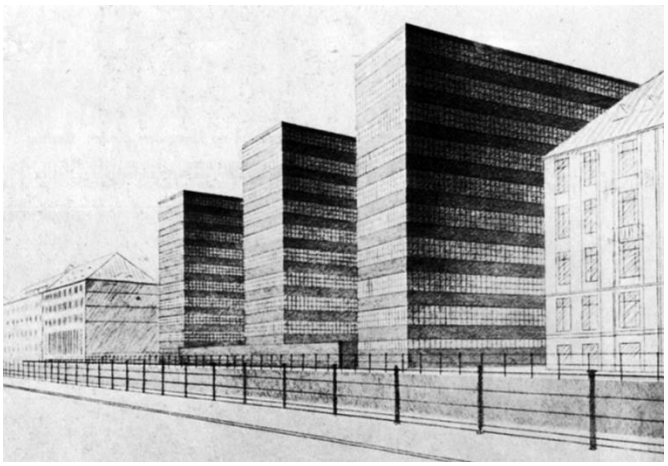


Fig.93. Mies van der Rohe, Deutsche Reichsbank, Berlin, 1934

In front of the iconic sign of Paris, joined by his favorite artists – the main architects of his regime Albert Speer and Herman Giesler, along with the sculptor-in-chief Arno Breker, the Nazi dictator symbolically demonstrates his military triumph, which entitles him symbolically to redesign the whole world.

".. the architect has to establish a relationship with the rich and the powerful. There is nobody with the resources to build…They (the architects) have no alternative but to trim and compromise with whatever regime is in power" (Sudjic, 2005:10).

The architect is predestined by his wish to realize what he has designed in reality and interference with the influential personalities of the day is often inevitable, even sometimes at the price of a Faustian bargain, which history could interpret ambiguously

It is not a secret but it is not popular that Phillip Johnson has recommended Mies van der Rohe to Hitler back in 1933 for the Deutsche Reichsbank competition (Fig.93). Or that Le Corbusier has joined the collaborationist regime of Marshal Phillipe Petain in Vichy France, aiming at large-scale architectural assignments. In the early 50-es of the last century Jorn Utzon has been invited to design the building of the Kuwait Parliament as an act of ungainly reference of the Gulf oligarchy to the Scandinavian sense of democracy (Sudjic, 2005:10). In 1980 in the announced by Saddam Hussein competition for the design of a state mosque for 30 000 worshipers in Bagdad, seven architects celebrities, including the postmodern conceptualist Robert Ventury, participated. Eventually the dictator did not ever commit himself to any of the Western architects, not even ever to the Iraqi-born most celebrated woman architect in the world Zaha Hadid. It was not before July 2010 when she has been invited to design the war damaged building of the Central Bank in Bagdad by Tigris river and the Iraqi Parliament in 2013 (Fig.94).

Fig.94. Z. Hadid, Central bank (2010) and Parliament buildings design (2013) in Bagdad

If Sadam has ever given such a chance it would have very probably been an act of cunning propaganda for him and a pretension for a sophisticated governmental system, consolidating his regime. For the eventual architect accepting such a

hypothetical assignment would have probably meant probably end of career in the Western world, in the context of the valid social attitudes. But years later, opposing the criticism of his participation in projects in Beijing, Rem Koolhaas says: "the West can't act as if it still possessed global hegĕmony. At the moment we experience a drastic shift, powers are suddenly shifting to China, South-East Asia, Arab countries. Pure non-democracies are gaining influence" (Rauterberg, 2008:101).

### f) Multiplication of Resources

Large projects inspiring substantial public interest require a famous architect to participate with his name and to formulate the main design concepts, supported by reliable professional staff, experienced in management of complex projects. For example the project team of Walt Disney Hall in Los Angelis, apart from Frank Gehry, included 87 persons, led by a chief designer, 4 main executives, a project manager and one partner(Fig.95).

Fig.95.Fr. Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall, LA, 1999-2003

Serious design entities today should be able to afford at all various stages of the design process the concomitant services of artists, qualified scientists, sociologists, public opinion observers (from popular and specialized media), jurists, urban planners. The necessity of creation of new building materials and invention of construction technologies, needed for the realization of the design, is not uncommon – since the time of Sidney Opera House to the City of Masdar. And such an approach requires substantial intellectual, as well as material resources. The usual contacts with the authorities – inspectors, boards, revising the design work, contractors, politicians, clients – all these are compulsory for the execution of any successful type of business and also for the architectural ones too. Huge design teams, e.g. *Norman Foster + Partners* numbered over 1500 employees, located at cities all over the world, before the financial crises in 2009 when some of the

international branches had to be closed, remind of the multitudinous cast staffs of contemporary box-office hits or multinational corporations. In the structure of such expanded network of significant lot of assistants, the central role of the architect-creator tends to blur and the ground under the notion of real authorship is rather shaky. Who is the actual author of such design? The architect tends to transforms into a corporative manager, leading executive of a staff rather than an artist.

**But the audience, the critics, the historians prefer to think about the buildings as an artistic creation, identified with the personality a concrete architect**. This is how the cultural capital is being gained, symbolized by a name. By a label. This person should be the representation, the "nucleus" of the architectural concept, of the pure art in the entertainment, which is solely entitled to the architect-patron and by presumption associated mainly with the idea of the expressions of the visual design.

Moreover, large architectural practices could even join forces for the purposes of large-scale international projects. For the design of the Louvre Lens Museum in Lille, opened in 2012, three famous teams cooperated – Sanaa fom Japan, New-York-based Imre Culbert and the Paris landscape practice of Mosbach Paysagistes (Fig.96).

Fig.96. Sanaa, Culbert, Louvre Lens Museum, Lille, 2012

Fig.97. J. Nouvel / N. Foster, Wallbroock Square, London, 2007

In 2007 the municipality of London approved a spectacular project of the star tandem Norman Foster/Jean Nouvel for a complex building at Wallbroock square, accepted ubiquitously by the press, popularly known as "*Darth Vader's Helmet*" and until today, unrealized (Fig.97). In 2000 Herzog/de Meuron and Rem Koolhaas co-operated in a celebrity team for the fulfillment of several projects, among which a prestigious hotel in New York for Ian Schrager, called the "Mushroom Model". The September 11$^{th}$ events of 2001 prevented its implementation.

Collaboration appears to be one of the essential factors of contemporary culture of architectural design. A multiplication of resources of this kind, not only quantitative but also qualitative, becomes the platform, enabling the star architects to stabilize

their honorary elite position, fulfilling easily the potentialities of their contacts at the administrative and corporate peaks. The scandalous situation of 2003, around the international architectural competition, won by Daniel Libeskind for the master-plan and Freedom Tower at Ground 0 in New York, among others exposed a curious sociological detail (Fig.98). Only an architect of a world fame like Libeskind, could have afforded to hire somebody like the known for his friendship with Governor Pataki New-York-high-rate lawyer Edward Hayes in his fight with the developer Larry Silverstein, which eventually favored for the task David Childes from S.O.M (Fig.99).

Fig.98.D. Libeskind, Groun 0, Manhattan, 2003

Fig. 99. D. Childs, Freedom Tower

In 2014 the freedom tower of David Childes came into reality.

The collision of interests and power in the world of high level architecture today does not differ in the least from the struggles in the financial and economy high class spheres. Over a certain threshold, the correlated factors "**material vs symbolic" capital,** enhance and multiply boundlessly. Due to obvious incongruity of interests provoked by the issue of the architectural development of the most observed building plot in the world which Ground 0 is, it took more than 12 years to finish the Freedom Tower.

### g) Media and Critics Engagement

All of the star-architects are being actively presented by the press, in various manners and in most of the cases, are media favorites. The relations are usually direct. Herbert Muschamp (Fig.100), the famous critic of the *New York Times*, never has even tried to conceal his personal connections with the architectural majesties,

usually represented by him – for example he openly discussed what Frank Gehry's opinion of his private home library may be.

Fig. 100. H. Muschamp (1947-2007)

Fig.101. Ch. Jencks and N. Foster, London, 2001

This is a deliberate, rational and carefully cultivated demonstration of involvement, aiming to hold a constant position in the very center of public attention – a compulsory precondition for the success of a public profession such as architecture is. Presentations at the front page of the editions and satisfactory design fees are by no means correlated. Famous architects have to sustain their popularity alive, Charles Jencks interviews Norman Foster and this is a story (Fig.101).

The design solutions and their notable authors are not only on the pages of the specialized press, but also in lifestyle magazines, which pay little attention to architectural concepts instead of personal particularities, concerning the architects. A new type of critique has emerged **– the accent is concentrated on the person.** The star-architects are in direct contact with the media, although the large architectural formations rely to official press offices as a rule. Relative relations are not exceptional – the renowned publisher Cintia Davidson, chairman of *Anyone Corporation,* which has for 10 years been dealing with culture in architecture at the end of the XX century, became Peter Eisenman's wife in 1990. In 2006 she published the book "*Tracing Eisenman. Complete works*."

When, during the late 80-es, Frank Gehry is commissioned the design of Walt Disney Hall in L.A. there was a discussion why a more prestigious architect had not been chosen instead of him. Some members of the municipal authorities in LA even warned against his design, which threatened to turn the city into ridicule. But in 1997 *The New York Times* emotionally called the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum a "*miracle"* in Muschamp's article "*The Miracle of Bilbao*" and practically announced the star

debut of Gehry. When in October 2003 the Philharmony Hall was officially opened, the architect is already among the elite of internationally significant architects and then a question has been raised why Getty Center had not been commissioned to him also instead of to Richard Meier in its time. Obviously, in 1980 Meier must have been the bigger star. In February 2010 the popular English classical music magazine "*Gramophone*" announced Walt Disney Hall among the musical spaces of the first decade of the XXI century, together with Henning Larsen's opera house in Copenhagen and the art center "Regina Sofia" in Valencia of Santiago Calatrava. (Fig.102,103,104)

Fig.102.Fr.Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall LA, 2003

Fig.103. H.Larsen,Opera House, Copenhagen, 2005

Fig.104.S.Calatrava, Regina Sofia, Valencia, 2005

One of the well-known names, noted for his successful marketing strategy in the circle of world-famous architects was the late owner of the publishing house *Academy editions* (now part of *John Willey*), Andreas Papadakis (Fig.105).

He happened to be the first editor of **Jenks's "The Language of Post-Modern Architecture** "back in the '80-s. Several years earlier he had promoted the names of Zaha Hadid and Bernardt Tschumi, as remarkable representatives of the widely discussed by its time vanguard movement of deconstructivism in architetcure. Deconstructivism itself, as an distinctly elite stylistic current, imported into architecture from literature, and deemed the intellectual alternative of postmodernism, disposes of serious support in the influential world of architectural critique, as well as of extensive reflection by the press symposia in USA and Japan, in the prestigious Tate Gallery in London and the emblematic exhibition in 1988 in MoMA New York, under the patronage of Philip Johnson.

The attention of high-level architectural critique – from the class of Herbert Muschamp, Michael Sorkin, Nicolai Ouroussoff (*The New York Times, Architectural Record)* Christopher Hawthorne (*LA Times Magazine*), or Frederic Edelmann (*Le Monde*) is crucial for the architectural success.

The attention of high-level architectural critique – from the class of Herbert Muschamp, Michael Sorkin, Nicolai Ouroussoff (*The New York Times, Architectural*

*Record)* Christopher Hawthorne (*LA Times Magazine*), or Frederic Edelmann (*Le Monde*) is crucial for the architectural success.

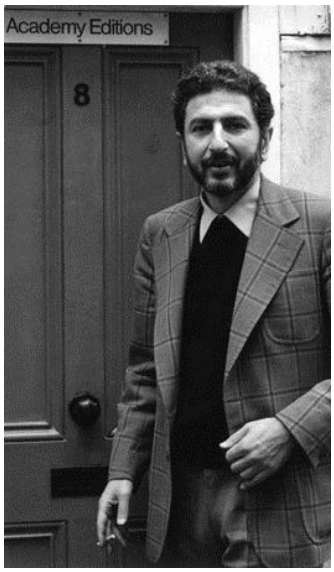



Fig.105. A. Papadakis (1038-2008)

Fig.106. N. Coates

The attention of high-level architectural critique – from the class of Herbert Muschamp, Michael Sorkin, Nicolai Ouroussoff (*The New York Times, Architectural Record)* Christopher Hawthorne (*LA Times Magazine*), or Frederic Edelmann (*Le Monde*) is crucial for the architectural success.

According to Michal Sorkin's observation, his predecessor Muschamp has demonstrated definite preferences for the work of a certain limited circle of architects – Rem Koolhaas and Frank Gehry have been mentioned in 37% of all his publications, Greg Lynn and Peter Eisenman – in 28%. For comparison – names of women architects, apart from huge architectural companies, have been mentioned in less than 6% of the number of publications. Quite controversial figure of an intellectual, member of Andy Warhol's circle and graduate of the AA in London Herbert Muschamp plays a decisive role in the process of forming the contemporary culture of architectural celebrity, due to his high position in the critique hierarchy and his exceptional concept of the compulsory association of art and fame. His 12-years-period of being official architectural critic of *The New York Times,* is not accidentally called "*era of Muschamp"* – not only because of his captivating intellectual expressionistic style, but also because of the incredible influence he used to exercise over the processes in the world of the architectural elite and his power to "*change history*". When in 2003 he gathered part of his closest friends, which happen to be some of the most renowned architects in the world, to discuss the idea of the reconstruction of the demolished towers of the WTC, the subsequent publication of the results of this meeting on the pages of the authoritative press radically changed

the direction and the character of the social debate on the matter that followed, as well as the attitude of the owner of the plot – *Lower Manhattan Development Corporation*, which almost immediately started a new projection procedure (Risen, 26.06.2004).

### h) Interdisciplinary Dependence

Architecture lost its relative independence at the turn of the XXI century. Its emancipation from the rest of arts, started during the time of the Renaissance and gained full strength of self-reference in the years of Early Modernism, exposed itself during the last decade to a new type of creative synthesis, whose genesis, philosophy and means of expression have no equal. After the rejection of Modernist tectonic self-sufficiency, to adapt and prosper, the INSTITUTION ARCHITECTURE allowed itself unprecedented interdisciplinary inter-relation.

“Architects had better get used to the fact that we’re part of much wider network that includes not only the building team, but also curators, inventors, media mavericks, artists, graphic designers, writers, and film makers” (Coates, 2003:26), says Nigel Coates, a most extravagant contemporary British architects and designers (Fig.106).

Contemporary architect boldly overstepped the strict borders of the profession, limited to the traditional means of architectural expressiveness. The dynamics of the internal relations of the different art branches is activated in general, as a consequence of its overall predisposition to enter in intercourse with the various external ambient phenomena.

The character of the messages and the intensity of the suggestions, which have escalated in the latest examples of cutting edge architecture all over the world, dictate **a new sensibility.** It strives for full representation through the unlimited visual possibilities, which contemporary technology, science, arts and media are ready to provide. Traces of distinctive elements of industrial design, graphic design, computer generated objects, interior decoration, scenography are easy to be identified in the exemplary buildings today.

The example of ONL, a multidisciplinary design-office in the Netherlands, is especially illustrative of such a mimesis. It comprises architects, visual graphic designers, web designers, computer creators and artists, working on mixed art forms, architecture and technique, using general digital computer products. And their approach is not an exception (Fig.107).

The relative immobility of the architecture of the ’90s has been attacked trough a projection process, reconsidered in the realm of contemporary conditional cyberspace. For Lars Spuybroek from NOX e.g. “architecture is a kind of genetic

engineering", **in the combination of various media approaches, mixtures of parallel worlds,** which eventually results in stunning representations (Fig.108).

Fig.107. ONL, CET, Budapest, 2008

Fig.108. NOX, Three Graces Bridge, Dubal, 2008

The newest avant-garde architecture turns into a good example of a **communicative synergy,** as complex effort of various factors – **signification systems, communicative strategies and approaches, leading to exceptional efficiency of the influence, the impact of the messages.**

What Jean Nouvel says about his project of Agbar Tower in Barcelona is that this is not just a skyscraper but a geyser, pulsating with the energy of its 4500 LED luminous devices. The light show, played by the building at the background of the Spanish night sky, really turns it into much more than a regular artifact of architecture

(Fig.109). This is a typical approach for Nouvel – the combination of lights and reflections. Unica Tower in Vienna is another example of his environmental entertainments – an unique combined light and musical performance by a building, called “twist and turn”, lasting 5 weeks in 2005. (Fig.110)

Fig.109.J. Nouvel, Akbar Tower, Barcelona, 2004

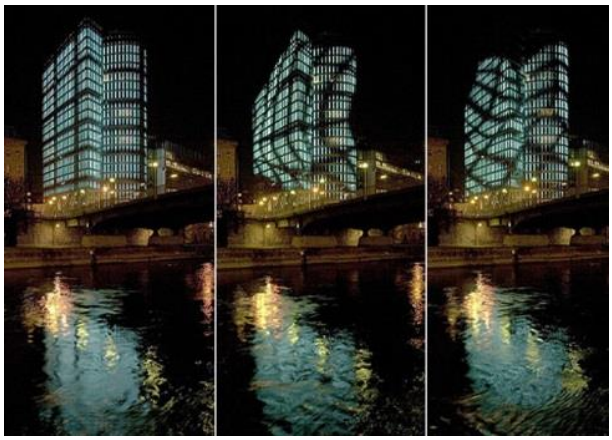


Fig. 110. J.Nouvel, Unica Tower Vienna, 2007)

Of major importance for the trend was the bursting forth building boom at the turn of millennium and the enlargement of the scale of the mega-projects (Beijing’s airport of Foster for example with 1000 000 sq.m. area), (111). The successful mastering of such volumes and qualitative new requirements that have to be met, like e.g. ecological considerations, makes a broad-range of inter-disciplinary dependences and provisions compulsory.

In the early XXI century architecture discovered an opportunity for re-confirmation in cooperation, not in differentiation, to some extend as a reaction to the modernist self-isolation and specific egalitarism. It expanded to the utmost the range of its interest towards various manifestations of creativity, in principle alien to its traditional representational realm. Thus architecture enriched the scope of pursuits striving for perfection of the production of its renowned representatives, by means, borrowed

from the overall spectrum of the creative apparatus of contemporary art and communication, encompassing as much aesthetical information as it can.

Fig.111. N. Foster, Beijing Airport,

For millennia the general cultural shifts have been designated in figurative architectural dimensions – architecture is the art of materialization of civilization trends. **We can think of the city as an entity, constantly cumulated by civilizations as a prolonged subconscious accumulation of information data. If our buildings today tend to convert into information interfaces, this is only the new outburst of the same memory saving mechanism, but exercised by the diversified electronic means of communication technologies, which define our civilizational moment in history. Because this is the spirit of our times, the way we communicate, the way we survive.**

It is obvious that responding to the values of the specific period of the digital era, architecture of the first decade of the third millennium adopts the visual protocols of its time which operate legible expected messages between the interacting objects in the complex visual communicative machine called the **Megapolis.**

## COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS AND URBAN HYPERMEDIA

A communication protocol is a **matter of conventions**. It is a system of digital logical formats and rules in IT, facilitating the efficient exchange of messages, which makes them compatible and legible for the messages-exchanging sides. The interacting agents have to be familiar with the same codification clues in order to understand each other as a prerequisite for the implementation of an efficient communication process. A protocol defines the syntax, semantics and synchronization of communication.

And architecture has always been about this – long term **agreed upon visual space protocols**, a social convention for identification of reference point enhancing the delicate balance of socio-cultural reproduction. In its essence it is a multi-criteria formula scheme, **defining results of the intellectual exploration of reality and simultaneously serving as a medium of the process.** Because buildings, and especially representational buildings, are materializations of the spirit of their time

Our era is the era of the images as already discussed – images have saturated our cities and they dominate our cultural environment today. They are ready to overcome reality, to substitute it. And consequently, the codes and the lexicons of the architectural representation in the era of the image are conceptualized by the spirit of contemporary media**.** The digital has informed the perception of reality. The city and its monumental objects are rationalized by a cinematic, scenography impulse, adapted as an architectural vision, informed by media principles.

Fig.112. Fr. Gehry, “Ginger and Fred”, Prague, 1992-1996 and paper bag university, Sydney, 2015

The profound impact of computing is obvious in the visual manifestations of numerous contemporary examples of unique architecture in our cities. The stylistic tends to be unstable, dynamic, MEDIATIC even at a first glance (Fig.112). The

underlying concept of the ephemeral nature of the world-wide Web occurs discernable in the material world of the built environment. And this built environment is inspired by the rules and mechanisms of a monumental **hypertext,** as if displayed on a computer screen with hyperlinks referring to some other texts in the global urban grid. This horizontal skyscrapers of OMA design 2009 and realized this year are very much like the ones of Steven Hall and like El Lissitzky's from 1929 (Fig.113,114,115).

Fig.113.El Lissitzki, Horizontal skyscraper, 1929

Fig. 114. St. Holl Horizontal Skyscrapers, Shenzhen, 2010

Fig.115. OMA, Interlace, Singapore, 2013

We are contemporaries of a unique phenomenon – cities from all sides of the globe look the same. And this architecture monumental hypertexts intertwine and create an information medium of unbelievable range and levels of expression, connecting and absorbing the overall valid concepts of visual world.

## ARCHITECTURE – MEDIA PERFORMANCE

What are the formal architectural reactions to this unprecedented symbiosis, transcending the mechanical integration of mass media mechanisms in the texture of the urban space.

Fig.116.E. Francois, Fouquet Barriere Hotel, Paris 2007

This is a luxury hotel in Paris, Edouard Francois's design from 2007(Fig.116). The exterior view is elusive, the windows are blind, it is not 4 but 6 floors high and the actual windows are not the niches but the computer-like monitors installed on the walls. The architect has taken as a model the façade of a block of houses on the Champs-Elysées Houssemann's architecture, flattened it out, dyed it grey and reproduced it in concrete around the corner in a genuine copy/paste manner. If you're going to build in the digital age using forms rented out from the past, all you need is a scanner and a casting mold. This is *a par excellence* mediatic rhetoric. The process of buildings creation takes advantage of communication means. And in result these buildings communicate their cultural messages according to the valid for the time media communicative protocols.

Contemporary architecture design strives for dynamic expressions, like in the WAU twisted link terminal – by bravely twisting ends of the structure 90-degree clockwise and creating a space in which the roof converts into walls and the walls turns into floor. Everything is morphing and floating into one another, like the endless media Mobius band, penetrating and moving endlessly in space (Fig.117).

The instability is the absurdity of the form is establishing as a model, similar to the mass media approaches of attracting public attention.

The imagery of the buildings of importance today tends to transform towards **emulation of the versatility typical of the ephemeral media, which is rephrasing its dynamic in architectural material means of expression** (Fig 118, 119, 120).

Fig.117. WAU, Twisted Link Terminal, China

Fig.118. M.Elam, M.Scogin, Kaohsiung maritime cultural pop music center, 2011

Fig.119.Z.Hadid, Sackler Gallery, London, 2013

Fig.120. MAD architects, Beijing 2050 project

The buildings are performing as **fluid, transparent, invisible** and **liquid**. They are adapting to preserve their role of a relevant factor in the visual industry of the contemporary mediatic world

Jean Nouvel for example shares his wish to design a house without walls and skeleton, declaring that he strives to change matter, fighting to overcome the tedious consistency and heaviness of gravity. His buildings are often meant to dissolve visually in the air, no wonder he says: “The most invisible architecture would have been the most magnificent one” (Хаберлик, 2001: 215). The “aesthetics of disappearance” seems to be a seductive creative challenge, commonly shared – Toyo Ito also speaks of dematerialization of architecture by translucent screens and

glass surfaces. Transparent architecture is typical for the urban environment of modern times, in various forms of formal representation (Fig.121, 122, 123).

Fig.121. J. Nouvel, Foundation Cartier, Paris, 1994

Fig.122.Tham & Videgard, Microcube Treehouse, Harads, Sweden, 2011

Fig.123. Gijsvan Vaerenbegh, The-see-trough-church, Limburg, Belgium, 2010

The high technological capabilities today allow of mighty transformations of the traditionally unmovable architectural image. The GDS Infifnity Tower in South Corea, under construction, is going to perform different stages of disappearance. It will house cameras installed on its facades that will capture real-time images of the surroundings, which will be displayed on hundreds of rows of LED screens spread over the tower and which will allow observers to take in the view that the tower would otherwise block. Digital processing will modify the images to allow the building to blend in with its surroundings further, thereby ensuring the camouflage is even more

effective. Projecting the environment on its surface the tower will be practically able to disappear (Fig.124).

Fig.124. GDS, Infinity Tower, South Korea, under construction

As if imitating the mechanism of media production and utilization, the architectural objects adapts to the tendency to become abundant and perishable, as if produced for quick consumption, substituted by the next offer, transcending the previous by originality and novelty. The buildings demonstrate a trend to look temporary, transient and provisional objects because flimsiness enables rapid alternations, entirely relevant to the spirit of contemporary consumers' society with its insatiable hunger for speed, entertainment and amusement. Every aesthetic offer gets immediately outdated, something new and interesting is required; actuality is the compulsory attribute of quality, according to which values are being judged. The mass audiences have to be attracted by all means and architecture is actively contributing to the contemporary urban carnival. The dramatically expanded realm of mass communication, operating as a reflection and secondary representation, ideally incorporates architecture in its matter. In result contemporary houses produce color, light, and sound, paying an unusual pro- active role in the city organism. Architecture convertes into a monumental media, which conquers culture space and generates endless memorable experiences (Fig. 125, 126).

Fig.125. T. Ito, Tower of Winds, Yokohama, 1986

Fig.126. N. Foster, Khan Shatir Center, Astana, 2006-2010

This new type of architecture experiences with their explicably short life span, meaning almost immediate oblivion of the form, pose architecture to a new dilemma.

Architecture is a dualistic art, combining in a complex osmosis a material and a spiritual component. The pervasion of the “new media virus” in architecture is facilitated by this innate immaterial component into the very core of the creative mechanism and it exerts large scale multiple influence on the overall operative instrumentarium of the art of architecture, corroding its traditional spirit of presence and durability of masses in space. They acquire transformative surfaces, which make them look different in time, as if they need to copy the sensational, whimsical, scandalous behavior of the new mass media today. As if architecture is striving to dispense of its durability, its sacred feature of eternity and try to offer to the spectators changing experience .and continuous amusement.

Fig.127. Arch. Exhibition of the XIV Biennale in Venice, 2014, performative façade skin

The technology of the kinetic façade, which textile cover is moved by controlled by a software automatic pistons, forming the varying configurations of the building skin is a familiar approach of the building industry today (Fig.127).

This type of **mobility** is in principle extraneous to the nature of architecture; it casts doubt on its fundamental culture values. For centuries the eternity of the architectural object, its privilege to exist as a stone memory has established it as a factor in the human compendium of socially valid factors. But when provoked by the neophylic expectations of the consumers processes of rapid experiences exchange (intrinsic to the immaterial media) project over the material environment, the model start to operate as dominant culture paradigms. Peter Eisenman writes: “Media introduce fundamental ambiguities into **how we see and what we see**. It defines reality in terms of media” (Eisenman, Visions Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media)

To preserve its integrity within the transformed socio-cultural context of contemporaneity architecture unfolded deep in the area **of its immaterial dimensions**. The technological capacity of the advanced media instrumentation offers unlimited creative possibilities for unfolding the imagination. The introduction of digital technology in the process of design and perception of architecture leads to a colossal escalation of these tendencies. An entirely different type of creative thinking in the process of the synthesis of the architectural image has been established as an artistic paradigm. Virtual realities became the design tools of analyzing the future buildings. Digital simulations are examining the traditional human space. The increasing reliance on internally defined determinants of software gradually leads to a condition so that the designed building imperceptibly begins to construct a specific digital identity of its own. All the intersections of complex volumes, wrappings, amorphous forms, organic structures, explosions and implosions, converting the buildings into elastic objects, which could be endlessly deformed by the program imperceptibly multiplies more craving for experiments and endless simulations. This is a captivating game, born in this new collaboration with the computer product, which gradually converts into simultaneously judge and inspiration of its founder. The new forms in the city, notwithstanding the fact that by the law of gravitation they have to step sound on its foundations on the terrain, **convert into material equivalent of the computer screens.**

Preconditioned in this technological paradigm of its media, being a media of its own, architecture starts to be perceived as an operational system which combined with the software algorithm of a certain type, satisfies varieties of requirements, selecting the most effective multicriterial solutions. What is even more remarkable is the fact that the electronic paradigm of visuality, the new visual protocol of the age of digitality**, the conventions of visuality, even the “*perspective,* “**the confirmed vision of the dominant discourse of architecture since the 15$^{th}$ century*”* (Eisenman). No matter now realistic the claims of the revolutionary impacts of the new media may

be - “the infinite mutability, the seemingly endless permutations and rotations of digital constructions, the speed of virtual travel within the image, not to mention the complexity of the networks of communication themselves, all lead to the suspicion that some transformation in subjecthood is under way… the relations between image and experience have nevertheless been changed beyond recognition” (Vidler, 2001:234)(Fig.128).

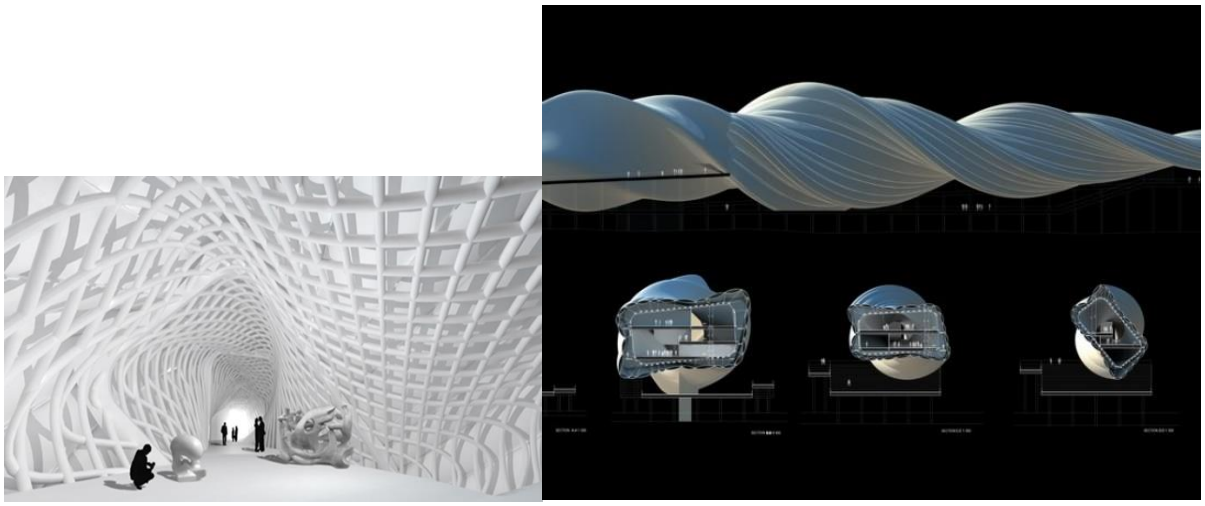


Fig. 128. MJZ Miami Pier museum, 2011

The space of architecture, the concept of the megapolis of the XXI century is not defined by the vision of a moving spectator any more **but by the concept of a scanning computer system.** The digital projections do not depend on time or space; similar to the ubiquitous media the experience of cyber-reality is defined by the condition of being everywhere at once. One example - *I have heard about* .. is a research of R@Sie(n) +D/B, a critical experience of space trough mutation of contextual parameters. Scenarios of hybridization and morphing give rise to perpetual transforming of architecture and it finally breaks the autonomies of object/subject or object/territory (R&Sie(n), I have-heard-about, 2006,www.new-territories.com). The visual protocol, the building code, becomes a modifiable idiosyncratic framework. The major content of the valid code is the endless modification (Fig.128).

The examples are numerous – the installation of the Islandic artist and architect Olafur Eliassen and the Chinese architect Ma Yansong *Feelings are Facts*. The status of human relationship with the urban surroundings is challenged, the viewer has to evaluate the traditional overall perception apparatus of the environment by the total sensitivity of an artificial reality, an osmosis of light, color, water, sky and temperature. The border lines of experiencing architecture are being pushed to new limits, beyond primary senses of spatial orientation and navigation (http://ucca.org.cn/en/exhibition/olafur-eliasson-ma-yansong-feelings-are-facts), (Fig.129).

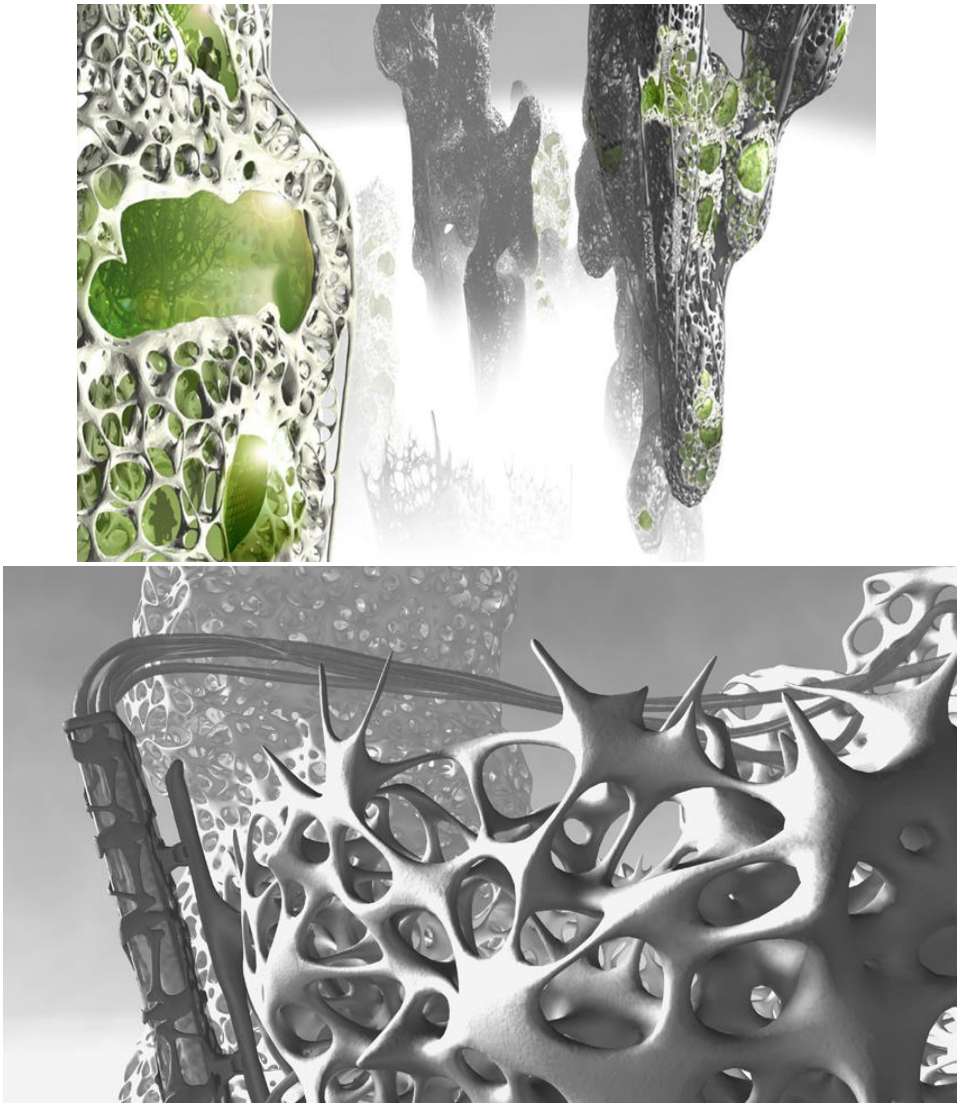


Fig.128. R&Sie(n), I have-heard-about, 2006

Fig.129.O.Eliassen, Ma Yansong, *Feelings are Facts*" UCCA, Beijing, 2010. photos:designboom

## CONCLUSIONS

The prevailing evanescent and spectacular spirit of the postmodern mentality threatens to convert architecture into a new hypermedia format, and striving to exist in accordance to its breathless pace, architecture of the last decade is ready to create a new type of reality. This reality is integrated in the new media and technology formats formulated according to their new rules. But it is curious as far as architecture is concerned – being an art, its creations should not be necessarily conceptualized as objective realities and on the other hand, the architectural environment structures **real** habitation, invariably loaded with social meaning and significance.

True to its dualistic nature, experiencing the hypertrophic upheaval of the various incarnations of the visual, contemporary architecture deviates in a specific mode of compensation of this controversy – as if this might be observed as some kind of a distorted provoked reaction against the extrinsic instability, transience, invisibility, immateriality, attributive to the current communication culture. Primarily material by nature, architecture reacts with an **emphasized affinity towards amplified impact of sensitivity, erupting in insatiable appetite for sublime effects of the presentational forms**. Presumably, the limits of the artistic expressiveness of the image have been transcended and **form decisively outperforms contents.**

**But could all this result in a loss of identity and gradual conversion of architecture into a kind of undistinguishable appendage of mass communication? And the discipline of architecture eventually annexed as a branch of media studies? Or technological experimentation?**

**My claim is that contemporary architecture and mass media are compelled to cooperate. Mass media are interested in the value of the aesthetic functions of architecture, because the appropriation of such qualities converts them into something more than a plain information machine, their message is promoted to the higher artistic level. And man is exceptionally sensitive to artistic visual influences, perceived directly, unconsciously and usually unquestioned. Media convert into a world which is able to offer much more to their unlimited audience as objects, images and emotions. Architecture as art humanizes media, introduces aesthetical considerations in an extraneous field.**

**Vise versa, the convergence effectively favors architecture too. The integration with mass media preserves the inviolability, the integrity of the system of architecture. Architecture extends and strengthens its social realization and becomes more effective as an adequate form of communication in the specific communicative situation. It is obvious that architecture, allowing propinquity and even identification with the instruments of new media, acquires new forces, becoming a part of an overall social**

**communication processes. Collaboration with the external cultural systems, especially with the dominant ones, provides the grounds of its social legitimacy of the whole Institution Architecture and the profession of the architect per se.**

**This is a new kind of "a business" collaboration – as already agreed upon architecture and mass media are types of business. Mass media assist architecture to enter deep into the connections and relations of the social reality, and architecture facilitates mass media to obtain the desirable artistic effects, which grants them the attraction of most gratuitous mass interest.**

The truth is architecture does not have any chance to react otherwise. In the dynamics of the concrete cultural moment its unique institutional position is jeopardized by displacement by the aggressive activities of much more flexible branches of visual industry. Architecture is threatened by the perspective of a potential loss of its validity as an established intellectual factor of society, in case it doesn't not harmonize rapidly with the pace and intensity of the cultural realities. And architecture, eager to preserve its centennial position of a monopolist of specific unique services, had to adapt its formal representations to the **media-technology-consumerism hyperinflation of rampant and breath- taking image production.**

Considering that this convention, reconciliation between new media, technology and architecture is coming at a price of hampering some of the basic principles of traditional understanding of artistic creativity, and thus polarizing the entire field of architectural culture, we probably have to keep in mind that architecture has always been **a system of conversion of external natural elements into a bearable state of space,** as Toyo Ito formulated it so clearly. Maybe architecture is getting advantage of the spirit of the time and its achievements to probably try to find new answers to old questions, stepping on the possibilities, ensured by technology, as means of representation, as media. An hypothetical option should not be excluded that this endless strive for new knowledge would result into the identification of the rationality of some lost primordial subconscious spatial sensitivity, which the people are trying to gain back, now equipped with the technological means which they have created for that matter.

And the secret might be that that the two opposite and opposing ends – tradition and technology, in fact share a common border – effective storage and decoding of cultural memory.

**If we create mechanisms today to reach the stars, we have to be aware to which extend they remain within the borders of human nature and how and to which extend, if at all, we are ready to allow them to transform us.** After all "Every society gets the visual environment it deserves. Doesn't it?" (Byrne, 2000:7).

## REFERENCES


Byrne, David. *The End of Print*, 1st edition, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2000

Chance, Julia., Torben Schmiedeknecht. Fame + Architecture, London,Willey Academy, 2001

Coates, Nigel. *Ecstacity,* PAP, New York, 2003

Eco, Umberto. *Function and Sign. The Semiotics of Architecture* in Rethinking Architecture, London, Routledge, 1997

Eisenman, Peter. *Visions Unfolding*:*Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media*

Friedman, Alice. *American Glamour and the Evolution of Modern Architecture***,**

Jenks, Ch. *The Iconic Building*, New York, Rizzoli, 2008

Jencks, Charles. *The Architectural Sign*. in Architecture and Urbanism №89, pp.3-10, 1978

Hays, Michael. *Architecture's Desire.* Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT press, 2010

Littlejohn, Stephen W., Foss, Karen A. *Theories of Human Communication.* USA, Waveland Press, 2011

Morin, E. *The Stars,* The Netherlands, Mouton, 1960

Ouroussoff, N. *By the Architects, for the People: A Trend for the 2010's.* The New York Times, 03.05.2010

Rauteberg, H., *Talking architecture*, New York, Prestel, 2008

Risen, Cl. *When Muschmp Goes, Angry Aversaries Ready for Revenge, The New York Observer,27.06. 2004*

Stevens, Garry. *The Favoured Circle*, Cambridge, Mass, the MIT Press, 1998

Sudjic, Dejan. *The Edifice Complex*, London, Penguin Press, 2005

Vidler, Anthony. *The Warped Space*, 2nd edition, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001

Williamson, Roxanne*. American Architects and the Mechanisms of Fame,* University of Texas Press, 2011

Worldwatch, *The State of the planet*, 2007

Блейс, Кр*. Изкуството днес,*К. 2001,

Морен, Едгар**,** ***в. Култура, препечатка от Le Monde***, бр. 1, 15.01.2010г.

Сегела, Ж. *Холивуд пере най- добре*,София, изд. Къща „Ив. Вазов“. 1999

Стефанов, Иван. *От естетика към социология на изкуството*, София, Аскони издат, 2004

Хаберлик, Кристина. *Архитектурата на XX век***,** София, Просвета, 2008г.

Юго, Виктор. *Парижката Света Богородица*, София, Отечество, 1987

Maria Diamandieva is architect, PhD, with more than 27 years of practice in architectural design. Assistant professor at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; honorary teacher of architecture and architecture as public media in the National Academy of Arts and the University of Architecture, Construction and Geodesy in Sofia. Author of more than 30 articles and publications, and one book. Editor of several professional editions. Director of the International Academy of Architecture. Lives in Sofia and Brussels.

e-mail: formaria@mail.bg